古い！

レトロゲームの必須ガイド

Retro GAMER™

AMSTRAD | COMMODORE | SEGA | NINTENDO | ATARI | SINCLAIR | NEO-GEO | SONY | COIN-OP | MOBILE

IKARI WARRIORS

THE FULL HISTORY BEHIND SNK'S RAMBO-INSPIRED COIN-OP SERIES



ALSO INSIDE

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メイキング

wipEout 2097

HOW PSYGNOSIS CREATED ITS STUNNING FUTURISTIC RACER



究極のガイド

20 YEARS OF DUKE NUKEM 3D

YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE CULT FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER

EASY RIGHT!

THE COLOURFUL HISTORY OF THE SEGA RALLY SERIES

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"I LOVE THOSE OLD 8-BIT MACHINES. I THINK THEY'VE STILL GOT A LOT TO GIVE"

MIKE DAILLY LOOKS BACK AT HIS DMA DESIGN DAYS

INSIDE THIS HI-TECH ISSUE RG.1.52 "rEtro"

GET INSIDE BLUE LIGHTNING

DISCOVER HOW EPYX CREATED ONE OF THE ATARI LYNX'S BEST GAMES

TRANTOR: THE LAST STORMTROOPER

NICK BRUTY AND DAVID PERRY REVISIT THEIR INSANELY HECTIC 8-BIT RUN-AND-GUN

ip IMAGINE PUBLISHING
DigitalEdition
GreatDigitalMags.com
ISSUE 152

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THE RETROBATES

FAVOURITE RUN-AND-GUN GAME



DARRAN JONES

I'm going for *Metal Slug*. It's not only full of solid power-ups and excellent bosses, but also features some of the best animation in the genre.

Expertise:
Juggling a gorgeous wife, two beautiful girls and an award-winning magazine

Currently playing:
Super Punchout!

Favourite game of all time:
Strider



NICK THORPE

My heart says *Secret Commando* for the Master System, but my playing habits would suggest *Mercs* is the true answer.

Expertise:
Owning six Master Systems (I sold one)

Currently playing:
Silpheed

Favourite game of all time:
Sonic The Hedgehog



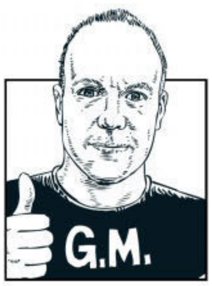
PAUL DRURY

It has to be the first *Metal Slug* but I do have a soft spot for *Commando* on the C64. Taking out a mob of baddies with one well-lobbed grenade was ace.

Expertise:
Factory-damaged Spectrums

Currently playing:
The Witness

Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space



GRAEME MASON

Joffa Smith's finest hour: *Cobra* on the ZX Spectrum. Best movie game ever!

Expertise:
Adjusting the tape azimuth with a screwdriver

Currently playing:
Fallout 4

Favourite game of all time:
Resident Evil 4



DAVID CROOKES

I adored *Turrican* on the Amstrad CPC. It also appeared on the cover of the first copy of *Amstrad Action* I bought.

Expertise:
Amstrad, Lynx, adventures, Dizzy, and PlayStation (but is it retro? Debate!)

Currently playing:
Broken Sword 5: The Serpent's Curse

Favourite game of all time:
Broken Sword



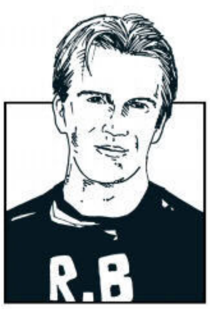
JASON KELK

I adore the first two *Turrican* games on the C64 or Amiga and finished both multiple times.

Expertise:
Being a homebrew hero

Currently playing:
Steel Dragon EX (PS2)

Favourite game of all time:
Io



RICHARD BURTON

Although I love all of SNK's *Metal Slug* games, the one I have invested the most playing time on and enjoy the most is *Metal Slug X*.

Expertise:
Time travel

Currently playing:
Tubaruba

Favourite game of all time:
Manic Miner



MARTYN CARROLL

Too many great ones to possibly choose! However, my go-to run-and-spit game would be *Toki*.

Expertise:
Sinclair stuff

Currently playing:
Unravel

Favourite game of all time:
Jet Set Willy



JON WELLS

I don't play a lot of run-and-gun games, but of the few I have played I've had some great fun with *Metal Slug*.

Expertise:
Tackling dirty nappies and retro spreads

Currently playing:
The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt

Favourite game of all time:
Super Mario World

LOADING...



Ever since we ran our massively popular PlayStation cover in issue 137, we've been looking to follow it up with an iconic PlayStation game. Now, thanks to The Designers Republic, we've found that game – *WipEout 2097*.

One of the biggest issues I've personally had with PlayStation art (or any game system art from that era) is that they are low-quality renders that look dated. Thankfully that's not a problem with the artwork for *2097*. It's an iconic piece that not only encapsulates the game but also the club culture that was helping the PlayStation to dominate its competitors during the mid-Nineties.

The game itself is every bit as good as the art that adorns its cover too, and it's story it particularly interesting. It started off life as a simple 'tracks pack' for the original game, until its creators fought to make something more epic, more special; the end result is arguably the best game in the series.

But don't worry, if you're not a fan of *WipEout 2097*, there's plenty more to discover, including the history of *Sega Rally* and the making of *Blue Thunder*. There's also a run-and-gun theme, with articles on *Ikari Warriors*, *Turrican II* and *Trantor: The Last Stormtrooper*.

Enjoy the magazine!



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>> Load 152 Breathing new life into classic games

The History Of: Ikari Warriors

Everything you need to know about SNK's gung ho homage to the *Rambo* films



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The Making Of: WipEout 2097

We reveal the fascinating story behind the greatest futuristic racer released for Sony's PlayStation



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Ultimate Guide Duke Nukem 3D

Celebrate 20 years of the politically incorrect Duke with our ass-kicking feature

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"As soon as we were going into people's brains, I wanted to have secrets"





REVIEWS





ESSENTIALS



retroradar

GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE RETRO WORLD



» PC] Revolution was wise to hang on to *Broken Sword*, as previous publishers Virgin and THQ are both defunct.



» Charles Cecil

REVOLUTION TURNS BACK THE YEARS

25th anniversary box set includes developer's back catalogue and more

CONTENTS

Revolution Software has announced a special box set of games to celebrate its 25th anniversary. *Revolution: The 25th Anniversary Collection* contains all of the company's original games to date, as well as *Broken Sword* and *Beneath A Steel Sky* comics, an audio CD, a *Broken Sword* USB stick containing the complete soundtrack for every game, a DVD and more. *Revolution: The 25th Anniversary Collection* is out on 11th March 2016 for PC only, with a RRP of £29.99.

To find out more about Revolution Software's anniversary and the collection, we spoke to the developer's co-founder Charles Cecil.

Why do you think Revolution has managed to survive over the last 25 years, where other developers have fallen by the wayside?

I think it's probably because we've stayed independent over that time. Obviously companies that get bought or partially bought are then at the whim of the purchasers and politics. The first publisher that we had was Mirrorsoft, and Mirrorsoft was absolutely awesome, it was a fantastic publisher which was brought down by the death of Robert Maxwell and the shenanigans that were going on that were absolutely outside the area of business that the games side was undertaking. Then we worked with Virgin, and we had a great relationship with Virgin but they were brought down by the company politics of Viacom and Spelling Entertainment and all of that stuff.

One of the key things for us is that, as a small developer, we maintained our IP and obviously for a game like *Broken Sword*, for us it was much more important to exploit it than it would have been for a publisher. If Virgin had owned *Broken Sword*, when they disappeared then almost certainly there would be no more *Broken Sword*. But because we owned it, we were able to take it across with *Broken Sword 3* for consoles and PC, and continue on with *Broken Sword 5*. So I think it is because we've never been acquired by anybody, and we've maintained our independence.

The choice to release a physical collection is certainly unusual in the modern PC market, isn't it?

Back in the day we used to love buying boxes, opening them up and finding lots



» [PC] *Beneath A Steel Sky* is as immersive as it ever was, but without the fun of disk-swapping.



» PC] Revisiting *In Cold Blood* may be a pleasant surprise for many, or a recurring nightmare,

CLASS OF 91

The key developers that are celebrating 25th anniversaries this year

ID SOFTWARE

■ John Carmack, John Romero, Adrian Carmack and Tom Hall founded a development team off the back of shareware platform games, but quickly found success with *Wolfenstein 3D* and *Doom* that set the team on a path to riches. The last founding member, John Carmack, resigned from the company in 2013.

BLIZZARD

■ Founded as Silicon & Synapse, Blizzard made reasonably well-known games like *The Lost Vikings* and *Rock N' Roll Racing* before changing its name and experiencing major successes with *Warcraft*, *Diablo* and *Starcraft*. All three co-founders remain at the company, which has been owned by Activision since 2008.

BUNGIE

■ Though Bungie had success with *Pathways Into Darkness*, the *Marathon* trilogy and *Myth*, the company's broke into the mainstream during its relatively brief spell as a Microsoft subsidiary when it launched the Halo series. Co-founder Jason Jones remains at the company and served as the project director for *Destiny*.

of goodies in there. I think the ultimate was probably buying *Ultima VII* and finding the cloth map and finding the little stones and the little models and everything – or indeed Microprose, where you'd open up the box and find this enormous great manual for the simulators. I really miss that because what happened then was to get the cost of goods down, publishers changed all of that and just put everything onto DVD and even though there was a large Sierra box, there was just a DVD with cardboard around it.

So I've always loved the idea of going back to an exciting box, which has both the games and also a load of peripheral stuff as well. We've got a *Broken Sword* memory stick in there, we've got a DVD which has a timeline – which people, I hope, will really enjoy because there's two hours of video, really professionally made video, about the history of the company, about the ups and downs, about when we really ran into trouble after *Broken Sword 3*. Despite the fact that the game had earned a good few millions of dollars for THQ, we'd made a £200,000 loss and had an overdraft to maintain. All these stories over two hours, which have been very skilfully weaved together by a filmmaker, Chris Brooke, and I hope anybody who has an interest in the industry, or in Revolution or adventures, will find the footage, the film interesting.



» PC] Nicole Collard is still finding herself in perilous situations 20 years after her debut.

> **"We include some footage of Good Cop Bad Cop!"**
> Charles Cecil

We're interested to see the documentary footage, particularly as there have been some things that Revolution has worked on down the years that didn't come to pass, like *Good Cop Bad Cop*...

We include some footage of *Good Cop Bad Cop*! Never before seen footage, and we explain why that got cancelled. And then there was a project that we can't name because we're contractually constrained from doing so which also got cancelled, and when that happened we had to scale right back. We had this office that was designed for 40-50 people, and it went down to three of us. And again all of that, that whole story, is covered in this two hours of footage.

What does the future hold for Revolution?

We're considering our options. We have an original IP, we have a lot of people contacting us about *Beneath A Steel Sky 2*, which we wouldn't even consider without Dave Gibbons, but that's something that we're excited to do, and we've got loads of ideas for *Broken Sword* as well. We're in the fortunate position of having lots of ideas – more ideas than we can do with a small team. *





WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

- LURE OF THE TEMPTRESS
- BENEATH A STEEL SKY
- IN COLD BLOOD
- BROKEN SWORD: THE SHADOW OF THE TEMPLARS
- BROKEN SWORD II: THE SMOKING MIRROR
- BROKEN SWORD: THE SLEEPING DRAGON
- BROKEN SWORD: THE ANGEL OF DEATH
- BROKEN SWORD 5: THE SERPENT'S CURSE



RETRO VGS REBORN

After its Kickstarter spectacularly failed last year, the Retro VGS is back with a new name and a new plan. Mike Kennedy and his designers have teamed up with Coleco and renamed the system the Coleco Chameleon. The device is due to launch this year and a selection of launch games has been revealed. Interestingly, a large number of Coleco and Intellivision games are included, although it's unclear if these are the original games, compilations or standalone titles. In fact, information in general is irritatingly vague at the moment, so hopefully more will be revealed at this month's Toy Fair in New York.



SEGA CLASSICS 3D

Frustratingly, Sega never released its original 3DS classics compilation in the West, choosing instead to keep it exclusive to Japan. Fortunately, it appears to have had a change of heart, as a new compilation is now heading to America. *Sega 3D Classics Collection* will include *Power Drift, Puyo Puyo 2, Maze Walker, Fantasy Zone II: The Tears Of Opa-Opa, Fantasy Zone II W, Sonic The Hedgehog, Thunder Blade, Galaxy Force II* and *Altered Beast*. It's unclear if games will be available to purchase separately in digital form, or whether the compilation will even make it to the UK, but it's definitely a step in the right direction.





» [Amstrad] *Exolon* was a popular Hewson game that was particularly great on the Amstrad.

THE RETURN OF HEWSON CONSULTANTS

THE CLASSIC BRITISH PUBLISHER PLANS ITS VIDEOGAME COMEBACK



» Andrew Hewson



» Rob Hewson

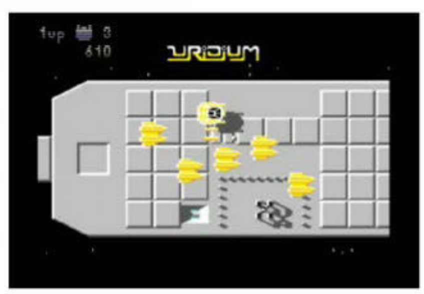
One of the UK's most beloved publishers has recently revealed that it will once again be returning to the games industry.

Hewson Consultants was a respected publisher during the Eighties, with a reputation for releasing incredible, arcade-styled games from a variety of up-and-coming developers. Andrew Braybrook's *Uridium*, Raffaele Cecco's *Exolon*, Steve Turner's *Quazatron* and John Phillips' *Nebulus* are just a few of the fantastic games it published and it went on to have a similar success when its founder, Andrew Hewson, went on to form 21st Century Entertainment.

It would appear, however, that the time has come for the original brand to be relaunched, and Andrew is still involved, this time as Hewson's chairman and finance director. "The UK videogames industry was born from the work of talented individuals, and I had the privilege of playing a part in those pioneering years," said Andrew in a recent press release. "Today we once again see innovative British teams delivering original, highly creative games and it is pleasing to see initiatives like the UK Games Fund supporting their work."

Joining Andrew will be technical director, John Ogden, who has worked at Blade Interactive, Dark Energy Digital and the BBC, and Andrew's son Rob. Like Andrew, Rob is a CEO and creative director at Hewson who has high hopes for the company. "I'm delighted to be joining the company I grew up with," Rob recently revealed. "Our aim is simple – to develop and publish original, innovative games once again. We are extremely fortunate to have a small but hugely passionate community of retro gamers behind us, and we are excited to take them along on this journey."

With Hewson's back catalogue currently owned by Rebellion Software, it's highly unlikely we'll see any of its classic games resurface, but the company is promising exciting new content, with *MeCHiNus*, a clockwork puzzle-platform-based game being its first release later this year. 2016 is also the year that Andrew's *Hint And Tips For Videogame Pioneers* is released. Look out for a review of both in a future issue.



» [C64] The games of Graftgold featured heavily in Hewson's early line-up. This is the excellent *Uridium*.


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Collector's corner



SUIKODEN (PLAYSTATION)
"My favourite RPG of the era, and the first JRPG I can remember playing. I bought it twice back in the day and traded it both times, probably for *FIFA* or something."
PAID: £40

GRAN TURISMO PRESS PACK (PLAYSTATION)
"I put so much time into *GT* back in the day. I've never seen another one of these so can't value it, but it looks so cool."
PAID: £25

MEDIEVIL 2 PRESS PACK (PLAYSTATION)
"I bought this from a friend who had a bunch of PlayStation promos. It's an extremely rare and unusually weird item."
PAID: £25

TEKKEN (JAMMA PCB)
"The series is special to me, so when I started collecting JAMMA boards I had to hunt this down. This was the game that told me the PSone was going to win its generation."
PAID: £26

JEWEL IN THE CROWN

THAT PIECE YOU CAN'T BE WITHOUT

TEKKEN 3 (PLAYSTATION, JAPANESE RELEASE)

■ "It cost me and my flatmate £75 and then another £100 for a TV to play it on. We spent hours playing it and unlocking everything. I sold the game a few years ago and I regret it. Certainly not the most valuable or rarest game I own, but it is my most treasured."
PAID: £75



Collector's corner

Readers take us through the retro keyhole

This month's collector hails from North East England and, despite a history of gaming stretching back to the ZX Spectrum and Amstrad CPC, holds Sony's original incarnation of PlayStation as the most significant platform in his own particular gaming history. "The PlayStation is hugely reminiscent of my favourite time of life," says Simon. "I had just moved out of my parents' house and my world involved music, clubbing, and, of course, videogames." At that point in time, the PlayStation was more than just a console; it was a talking point, a social platform and a popular post-pub form of entertainment for gamers across the world. "Gaming made a huge leap in that generation and the PlayStation had that 'attitude' vibe going for it. It all felt like a revolution at the time." But does he think that it is retro? We cheekily ask Simon, provoking that age-old debate. "I think so, it's certainly a different retro to previous generations, but very different to games today, and it has an unmistakable style."

Simon has been collecting on and off since childhood, but only since 2012 has he focused his efforts towards certain consoles and their respective libraries. In addition to an impressive set of PlayStation games, he is aiming for complete sets of Master System and Atari 7800 releases. "I'm continuing to drive my missus crazy by seeing how many games I can fit in my room," he laughs, although not too convincingly. "She has a bit of love/hate relationship with my collecting," he admits. "It keeps me quiet and out of the way when she is watching TV, but she doesn't understand the hoarding aspect of it and the fact it currently takes up two rooms in the house…" Simon's biggest regret is selling his much-played copy of *Tekken 3* many years ago. "I instantly regretted it, but couldn't believe my luck when I found a copy at the North East Retro Gaming show last year. Close inspection of the marks on the case and booklet confirmed that it was actually my copy that I had sold – it must have floated around Newcastle ever since – before finally finding its way home!" ✱

BIO

NAME: Simon McGuinness

ESTIMATED VALUE: £7,000-£10,000

FAVOURITE CONSOLES: PlayStation

FAVOURITE GAME: *Chaos (ZX Spectrum)*



GAMESTER EVOLUTION MOTION CONTROLLER
"It works a lot better than you would think, and it's fun to use on games such as *Hydro Thunder*."
PAID: £3 (at a car boot)


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the vault

THE COOL RETRO STUFF THAT WE'VE HAD OUR EYE ON THIS MONTH

PICK OF THE MONTH

Terrible Old Games You've Probably Never Heard Of

When people talk about terrible games, you're likely to hear the same old names crop up time and time again – *Shaq Fu*, *Superman* and *E.T.* are the proverbial dead horses. Luckily, Stuart Ashen has avoided retro gaming's designated targets of ridicule in this book and gone for some real obscurities that are no less deserving of a critical kicking.

If you've ever watched the author's YouTube videos you'll know that he's no stranger to home computers as well as consoles, and it's the former that he's chosen to concentrate on for this book. As a result, the likes of *Alien Sidestep*, *Count Duckula 2* and *Dangerous Streets* feature in this book. It's a nicely presented little volume too, with full colour printing and plenty of screenshots. If you've ever needed a guide to games that you should never attempt to play under any circumstances, this book serves as an excellent starting point.

Price: £15
From: unbound.co.uk/books/ashens

> "Stuart Ashen has avoided retro gaming's designated targets of ridicule in the book"

Shinobi III: Return Of The Ninja Master LP

Data Discs' love for Sega continues with a superb pressing of the second Mega Drive *Super Shinobi* game. The audio has been sourced from a Japanese Model 1 Mega Drive and sounds exceptional. *Shinobi III*'s bass-driven soundtrack has never felt more punchier, while the sound itself is incredibly clean. Like *Super Hang On, Shinobi III* is pressed on 180g vinyl and it also comes with a gorgeous artcard that's been sourced directly from Sega. It's missing four tracks from the original game, but this is otherwise hard to fault.

Price: £19.99
From: data-discs.com



Game & Watch Collector's Guide

If you've ever considered collecting Nintendo's *Game & Watch* range, this book is an essential companion. As well as detailing every game, along with price guides and rarity statistics, the book takes in every *Game & Watch*-related videogame and all manner of merchandise related to the brand. There's also a hardback version available.

Price: £29.99
From: funstockretro.co.uk

Sonic Boom Monopoly

It's *Monopoly*, but not as we know it – this time the board features the mysteriously bandaged *Sonic Boom* cast, with scarf-clad Sonic, buff Knuckles and other odd renditions of Sega's classic cast. You can buy locations such as Tails' Workshop, the Warehouse Of Boxes and the Evil Froglodite Cave, and pick up Let's Do This! and Village Chest cards.

Price: £34.99
From: funstock.co.uk

Super Hang-On LP

In terms of value, *Super Hang-On* is arguably the weakest LP that Data Discs has currently released. That's not a slight on Data Discs itself, but more down to the fact that there's so little music in the actual game. To perhaps make up for the seven available tracks Data Discs have included a gorgeous die-cut sleeve, which immediately makes it stand out from the other vinyl in its collection. The pressing is wonderful too, and up to the standard we'd typically expect from the company. Sadly, the limited red, white and blue splatter version has currently sold out.

Price: £19.99
From: data-discs.com

DISCUSS

What makes you give up on a game?

Forum
www.retrogamer.net/forum

■ Boredom and bad controls. I don't care how nice it looks or what the gameplay is like, if these are present, it goes.
dste

■ Invisible barriers. At least in old games with simple 2D graphics you could easily see where you can and can't go. Even if it was something pathetic like a small shrub obstructing you until you found the axe, at least the game was consistent. The biggest curse of modern first-person games is something like *Rage*, where you can't climb over a crash barrier beside the road, but the game will happily let you walk off a cliff when it feels like it.
joefish

■ As a bit of a completionist, I generally try to see out my games to the end no matter what. Even after losing hours of progress to dodgy save systems or missing a trophy/achievement because of a glitch. These days only extreme boredom can stop me. Usually something by Ubisoft.
Bluce_Ree

Twitter
Twitter.com/@RetroGamer_mag

■ A frustrating UI is one of the worst offenders for me.
@Sabriality

■ When a game randomly decides to change genre to one I don't like – like *Brütal Legend*, from a sandbox adventure to an RTS.
@MogAnarchy

■ Unskippable cutscenes. Sometimes I don't even get past the opening moments.
@Kosmikat

■ When it's an arcade conversion that's so difficult they up your lives from three to ten! *Ghosts 'N' Goblins* on the Speccy, anyone?
@TheRealSiMcD

■ When I smash the controller, it's probably time to stop…
@GWils2

■ Complicated controls, I take my time with games, if I can't remember how to play after a month away it's game over.
@devjsc

■ Huge difficulty spikes. Bad controls. Glitches that make it impossible to finish.
@heddersd

Facebook
facebook.com/RetroGamerUK

■ Peter Molyneux.
Michael Middlemast

■ A poor storyline, poor character development or rinse and repeat type game like *Call Of Duty* and *Battlefield* would just create boredom which would stop me playing.
Tim Hall

■ Grinding with a bad combat system… Roller coaster difficulty curves.
Juanca Daver

■ Just because the joypad has got all those buttons, it doesn't mean you've got to use them all.
Mark Hogg

■ Difficult bosses, going back too far when you die, endless levelling up, complicated controls, boredom and a short attention span! Also getting stuck on a section and not being able to do it despite checking out YouTube!
Wendy Drudge

■ Games where you have to protect another character with really bad AI and who always ends up walking into the line of fire (Yes Natalya in *GoldenEye 007* on the N64 - I'm looking at you).
Stuart Wilson

retro radar

a moment with…



» Duncan Gutteridge was showing of his stunning *Sonic 2* artwork he recreated for the original calendar.

Head to
LONDON GAMING MARKET
londongamingmarket.com for dates and information



» Over 2000 people ended up visiting the first London Gaming Market.

All images © Alan Chang



London Gaming Market

Andy Brown explains why his new event is a great place to get classic games

Where did the idea for the London Gaming Market originate?
There are a few similar markets in the North, and our partners at Showmasters run the Comic Market at the same venue, and we knew there was an appetite for a gaming market in London so we took the plunge. It's fair to say the launch completely exceeded our expectations with well over 2000 people attending!

What does LGM offer over similar buying experiences?
The admission price is just £2 after 12PM, and attendees don't have to fit their shopping around all the features of a full gaming expo. We don't anticipate the same visitor numbers as some of our bigger gaming events, however, every single person who attends the LGM is there for just one reason – to shop.

Why choose London as a location?
We wanted to launch a market that wouldn't conflict with existing events and would attract a new audience rather than our existing customer base. London was the logical choice, plus we already knew the venue and the staff, which makes life easier.

What percentage of the show is dedicated to gaming?
Two thirds of the market is videogaming and the other third is tabletop gaming. We may run a completely dedicated videogame market if the demand continues to increase as expected.

The first LGM event was late last year, what did you learn from it and what will you change?
Not to underestimate how many people will attend a launch event! We have taken more space for the next market to cope with the demand from retailers and attendees. The number of booked vendors is already higher than the launch event and we can accommodate more traders for the April market.

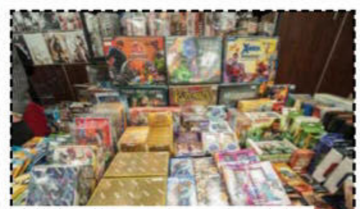


» You could buy all sorts of videogame-related goodies, including custom-painted consoles.

Is there the option to trade with vendors or is it sales only?
It is down to vendors whether they accept trade-ins but we don't discourage it. We would advise anyone who wishes to trade-in items to contact the retailers beforehand, though.

Why have you decided to make it a triannual event?
We know there is sufficient demand to run this regularly. Vendor bookings are already higher than the launch event and we are still two and a half months away from the next market.

Why is the event only on one day as opposed to the weekend?
Venue space in London is much higher than the rest of the country and running the market over two days would have made it cost prohibitive for us as organisers. Having a one-day event keeps the overheads down for vendors too as they don't have to pay for hotels and multi-day van hires. We chose to run the event on a Sunday as it meant there was no congestion charge and free on-street parking.



» Aside from videogames, there are plenty of other cool things to buy, including board and card games.

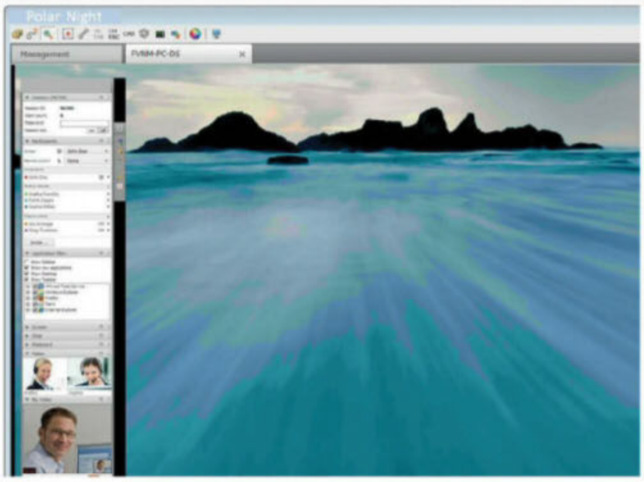
Why are these events so popular?
We are offering a single day shopping experience, both for the retailer and customer, without the overheads or trappings larger event. Tables are priced at a very reasonable £65 and trading at the LGM is open to everyone – full time retailers, eBayers and individuals looking to thin out their collection. *

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BACK TO THE NINETIES





[PC] MMORPG meets MUD on PC for RPG and, FYI, *EverQuest* was a cracking game.

THE LATEST NEWS FROM MARCH 1999

MARCH 1999 – The Neo-Geo Pocket goes colour, WonderSwan spreads its monochrome wings, Metal Slug X slithers into arcades, Um Jammer Lammy spanks a plank and Pokémon Snap develops well. Richard Burton snaps his Mankey Vileplume...



Newly available was SNK's Neo-Geo Pocket Color console. The original monochrome version had only been released five months earlier, but with competition fierce in the handheld console marketplace SNK was already playing catch up.

The NGPC, despite being late to the party, was wonderful. It was powerful, backwards compatible with its earlier sibling, had a bright crisp display – albeit not backlit – and excellent battery life. It sold well in its early days but dipped when further competition was announced with the Game Boy Advance and the Bandai WonderSwan.

A varied selection of games was available at launch with the pick being SNK's *King Of Fighters K-2*. Once again featuring single and team play and a variety of SNK characters, *King Of Fighters K-2* was great, helped in no small part by the excellent multi-directional micro-switched control pad, making controlling fighting games a joy rather than a thumb-numbing chore. European gamers hoping to give SNK's new handheld a thrashing would have to wait another six months…

Another console out this month, exclusively to Japan, was the aforementioned WonderSwan, the handheld hoped to appeal to a broad audience. Costing a competitive ¥4,800 (about £30) it was priced as an impulse buy rather than a considered purchase.

The WonderSwan wasn't without fault with a lack of ports for headphones and AC adaptors. It launched with seven games including *Rockman & Forte*, part of the *Mega Man* series and what a steaming pile of crud that turned out to be. There was also *Gunpey*, a puzzle games compendium, named after Gunpei Yokoi who started developing the console after being approached by Bandai. He never got to see it released after dying in a car collision in 1997.

The Game Boy Color, complete with burgeoning catalogue of games, destroyed the WonderSwan's efforts. However, this was no reflection of the machine itself. Unfortunately for Bandai, it just happened to be released in the middle of a handheld feeding frenzy, of which the GBC was the big fish.

Arcades had an array of coin-op releases this month. SNK released, or



[Neo-Geo Pocket Color] This was a superb launch title for the NGPC, *The King Of Fighters K-2*.

CHARTS

MARCH 1999

NINTENDO 64



1 Turok 2: Seeds Of Evil (Acclaim)
2 Rogue Squadron (Nintendo)
3 V-Rally Edition '99 (Infogrames)
4 1080° Snowboarding (Nintendo)
5 The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time (Nintendo)

PLAYSTATION



1 FIFA 99 (Electronic Arts)
2 Premier Manager Ninety Nine (Gremlin)
3 Tomb Raider 3 (Eidos)
4 Brian Lara Cricket '99 (Codemasters)
5 Tenchu (Activision)

PC



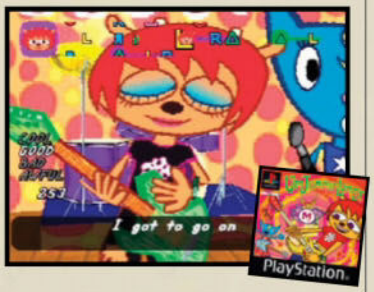
1 Worms (Sold Out)
2 Ultimate Soccer: Add On (Sierra On-Line)
3 Baldur's Gate (Black Isle)
4 Cannon Fodder (Sold Out)
5 Half-Life (Sierra On-Line)

MUSIC



1 When The Going Gets Tough (Boyzone)
2 Baby One More Time (Britney Spears)
3 We Like To Party! (The Vengabus) – (Vengaboys)
4 Blame It On The Weatherman (B*Witched)
5 Better Best Forgotten (Steps)

[PlayStation] The follow-up to *PaRappa The Rapper* was a fun rhythm game featuring a rock guitar-playing lamb.



rather re-released, *Metal Slug X*, an upgraded version of *Metal Slug 2*, although such was the overhaul it felt like a new game. It had more enemies, more weapons, more power-ups, more food, boss and vehicle locations had changed and the music was remixed.

Konami released *Silent Scope*, a counter-terrorism rail shooter game. It utilised a positional gun controller in the form of a sniper rifle mounted on the cabinet rather than an optical/light gun controller. While the graphics and gameplay were adequate, the in-game voice acting was ridiculously bad.

Sega's next coin-op release in its ongoing *Real Life Careers* series of games was *Airline Pilots*, a very adept airline simulator created with help from real pilots and engineers. You get to fly a Boeing 777 which you must take off and land against the clock. *Airline Pilots* was available in two cabinet variations including a deluxe three screen version for that immersive cockpit feel.

Back in the sofa world of home gaming, *Um Jammer Lammy*, a sequel to *PaRappa The Rapper*, arrived on the PlayStation. It was another rhythm action game but had the advantage of having a two-player mode allowing for competition or co-operation. The premise sees Lammy trying to get to a gig but she needs help from different teachers on each stage of the journey. Follow their lessons to the note and you progress. Better still, wing it with some improvised plank spanking and you will rank better and gain points more quickly.

[Arcade] *Airline Pilot*, part of the *Real Life Careers* series, was a testing and nerve-shredding Boeing 777 simulator.



Pokémon Snap was the pick of new Nintendo 64 releases this month and rather than catching them all you were tasked to photograph them instead.

Essentially a first-person rail shooter, it adopts a rather less violent type of shooting as you rove around an island searching for Pokémon to capture on film. You can take up to 60 pictures during a level. Once that level has ended your results are judged on composition, how many Pokémon are in frame and what they're doing to progress to the next course. Items to lure Pokémon into shot such as apples and a flute can be earned.

Pokémon Snap was a simple idea executed very well. Graphically the 3D worked nicely, portraying the wild Pokémon in a 'natural' habitat. The inventiveness and creativity of the game with the ingenious twist on the collecting theme was excellent.

Taking the gaming down a notch for a more relaxed experience was *EverQuest* by Sony for PC. The fantasy MMORPG let you design your character, wander the land exploring, fight, gain XP and hunt useful items along the way until you progress up a level.

EverQuest was a splendid game with a feel reminiscent of an old school Multi-User Dungeon (MUD) but with a very accomplished graphical interface. Such was its success that subscriptions to the online service overtook the fan favourite *RPG Ultima Online* for a while and with that the start of a long running series began… *



NEWS MARCH 1999

Like January 2016, March 1999 was quite the month for famous people shuffling off their mortal coil…

2 March saw revered singer Dusty Springfield die from breast cancer at the age of 59.

7 March saw the American film director and producer Stanley Kubrick die at the age of 70 after suffering a heart attack. He directed such acclaimed films as *The Shining* and *Dr. Strangelove*.



8 March saw American baseball legend Joe DiMaggio pass at the age of 84. He spent his whole career at the New York Yankees and had a short-lived marriage to movie icon Marilyn Monroe.

17 March saw Rod Hull, British comedian and television entertainer, pass away. He was most famous for his act with Emu, a large puppet that was always playfully aggressive towards the people in its immediate vicinity. Rod died in tragic circumstances after falling from the roof of his house in an attempt to adjust the television aerial. He slipped and fell through a greenhouse suffering a serious skull fracture from which he never recovered. He was 63.

Last but not least was British comedian and actor Ernie Wise who died of heart failure aged 73. He was most famous for being half of the much-loved comedy double act Morecambe & Wise.

On a more cheerful note, the best of the music album releases this month included *Middle Of Nowhere* (Orbital), *18 Tracks* (Bruce Springsteen), *Bury The Hatchet* (The Cranberries), *Rides* (Reef) and *Mule Variations* (Tom Waits).



[Arcade] SNK tweaked, remixed, prodded and modified *Metal Slug 2* turning it into *Metal Slug X*. Despite all the fiddling, it was a huge improvement.

THIS MONTH IN…

PC ACCELERATOR

PC Accelerator offered advice for those seeking employment in the games industry with an eight page article on ways to get into the business. There were various occupations outlined but they simplified it down to "four noble things you can do with computer games; make them, push them, review them or play them".



N64 GAMER

The Australian magazine had news that a new *James Bond* movie, *The World Is Not Enough*, had been announced and that Nintendo were after the rights to produce a game with Rare developing it. It transpired that Eurocom developed it, Electronic Arts published it and it was not a patch on *GoldenEye 007*.



NEXT GENERATION

Next Generation interviewed Steve Jobs, interim CEO of Apple, on how Apple wanted to conquer the games market. Given its previous attempt was the Pippin, nobody was concerned. However, Steve simply retorted, "A bunch of people here really like games and a bunch of people here are really smart".





[Nintendo 64] Photography and collecting collide to great effect in *Pokémon Snap*.


POWDE
Falcon



Roland Ahoy!

"YAR-HAR FIDDLE-DE-DEE,
BEING A PIRATE IS ALRIGHT WITH ME!"

#97

» COMPUTERSMITH » AMSTRAD CPC » 1984

"Arr there Jim me lad, time to splice the mainbrace and cast orf for another *Roland* game."

In this adventure Roland is now a pirate on the high seas (see, he is much more versatile than Sonic, Mario, Link et al), and he must collect as much treasure as possible. Initially, this game looks interesting and promising, if you were kind you could call it a first version of the classic '*Pirates*' game. But once you've played it for a while (read: more than five minutes), you will realise everything isn't all 'pieces of eight'.

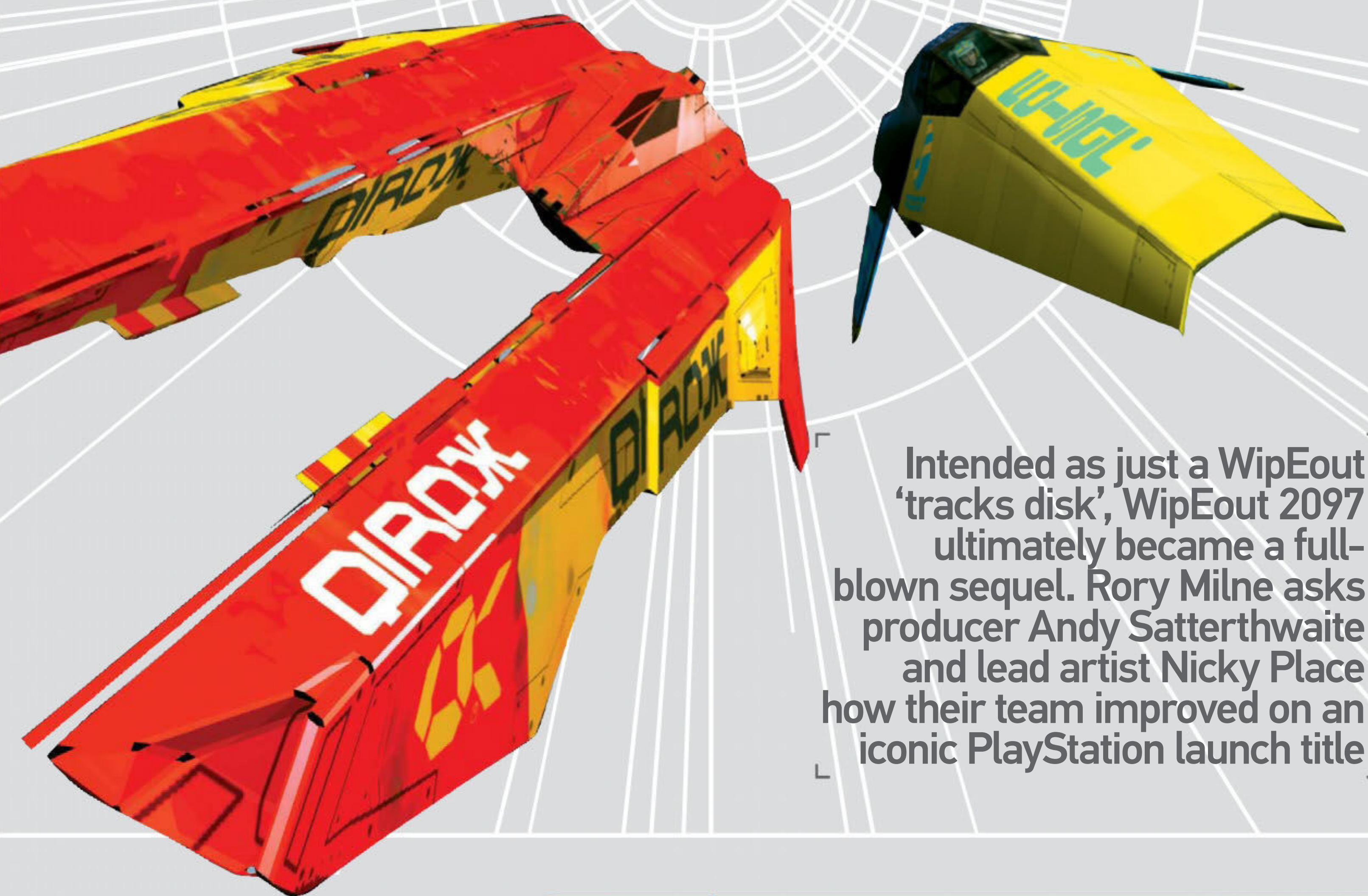
You have the main map screen, but there are only three set places you can go, and only in a set order, so this screen is really quite useless. Firstly you have to go to Powder Quay and collect cannonballs, secondly you have to blow up the 'boom' and go to Golden Harbour to get the loot, and lastly you take this loot and hide it in the Treasure Cove. And you have to do this over, and over, and over again.

At each location there is some frantic arcade action to get whatever it is you need to get. There's lots of running and jumping and avoiding nasties, and it's not that easy. It'd be a promising game if it just wasn't so repetitive. You might like to play it for a few times for the first five or ten minutes, but after that, it's all same old, same old. The only point in playing being to rack up the highest score you can. Not the worst *Roland* game, but it could have been better.

RICHARD GOULSTONE

メイキング

wipE



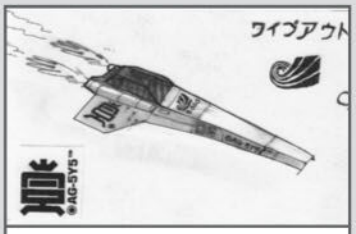
Intended as just a WipEout 'tracks disk', WipEout 2097 ultimately became a full-blown sequel. Rory Milne asks producer Andy Satterthwaite and lead artist Nicky Place how their team improved on an iconic PlayStation launch title

"out 2097

The impact of the original *WipEout* on the general perception of gaming can't be understated. With *WipEout*'s release, seemingly overnight, gaming grew up and became cool, it had shook off its geeky image and went mainstream. What is perhaps less well-documented, however, is the effect that Psygnosis' title had on the young game developers of the time. And in Andy Satterthwaite's case, *WipEout* was an influence on the then-youthful Psygnosis coder even before its launch. In fact, Andy describes his first exposure to the stylish racer as something close to love at first sight. "I was employed as a junior coder at Psygnosis in 1994. At about the same time, the company was working on a game for the PlayStation – [then] called the PSX. This was all very 'secret project', but I'd sneak over to play early versions of *WipEout* whenever I could. I remember the first time I saw it, it was just a checkerboard track sweeping through the sky. I've had a love of *WipEout* ever since."

Although Andy was restricted to admiring rather than contributing to the PlayStation launch title, he did subsequently work on the DOS version of *WipEout*, but the experience caused the young programmer to reassess his career options. "*WipEout* [on] PC was just the title I was assigned to as a programmer – more coincidence than anything. However, at the time, Psygnosis didn't have producers on its internal titles, rather the lead programmer would take those responsibilities. Our lead coder wasn't necessarily the best at this – though he was a very good programmer – and I stepped in on a few occasions making decisions that were probably way above my pay grade. Somehow this must have been noticed by someone, because towards the end of that conversion I was approached by one of the senior producers in the studio suggesting that I apply for one of the new 'internal producer' roles they were hiring for. For me this was a complete no-brainer, it was quite apparent that my coding skills were not up to the standard of those around me, but if I could help organise something then that would be brilliant. During my interview, I begged and pleaded to be given the sequel to *WipEout* – if it happened. I apparently did a good line in begging and pleading."

Given hindsight, a *WipEout* sequel seems like an obvious title for Psygnosis to have commissioned. But at the time of Andy's interview it wasn't clear how successful the game would be, and even after his promotion, Andy found himself producing an expansion disk for *WipEout* rather than a follow-up. "I believe the success of the original *WipEout* came as a bit of a surprise to the Psygnosis/Sony executives. No sequel had been planned prior to its release. In addition, the majority of the original development team had left to form their own studio, and so the company was left with the need to produce a sequel with no time and no team. The directive was just to produce a 'tracks ▶



» A cool early sketch of the AG Systems ship. There are five teams in the game, with Piranha being secret.



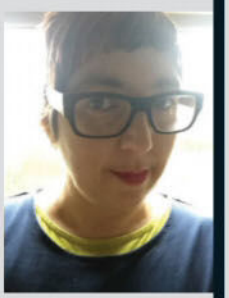
» [PlayStation] Just visible on the North American Spilskinanke track is a waving cat, signifying luck.

PIRHANA



WIPEOUT 2097 101

■ The sequel to the future racer *WipEout*, *2097* improves and expands on every area of the original. In *2097*, scraping course edges causes slow-downs rather than full-stops, and weapons damage and destroy competitor ships. *2097* also has a smoother difficulty curve, more teams, courses and weapons, and more acts on its soundtrack.



»Nicky Place is a co-founder of the award-winning graphic design agency, Build.

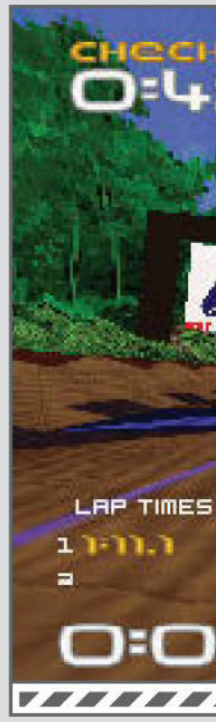
disk' – basically an expansion set to the original. The title was *WipEout 2097* in Europe because we didn't want to imply it was a full sequel. It was *WipEout XL* in the US because – apologies to all US citizens – someone at Psygnosis [was] determined that the US audience wouldn't understand the idea of 100 years in the future in the title and would question where the previous 2096 games were. The original proposed title for the US was *WipEout XS – Excess* – but I pointed out that this could be interpreted as 'extra small' and thus wasn't ideal!"

Beyond considering what to call his *WipEout* expansion, Andy also had overall responsibly for delivering the game with a team that included developers of the original *WipEout* and Psygnosis new starters. "As the new producer I was given a team: myself, Nick Burcombe – part time, three coders – two new to the studio, and six artists – including Nicky Westcott, who'd been one of the leads on the original."

In order to define the look of *WipEout 2097*, lead artist Nicky Westcott – now Nicky Place – drew inspiration from a range of eclectic sources, but Nicky remembers the original *WipEout* providing her team with their starting point. "The look was very much set by the original game, which was the brainchild of Jim Bowers – creative concept – and Nick Burcombe – game design. There is an big influence of Japanese culture that stemmed from our working so closely with The Designers Republic – more so than on the previous game. There is a huge mash up of influence in there: *Akira*, Japanese pop culture, Ken Ishii, British techno, British industrial and urban landscapes, *Blade Runner* and input via tDR's aesthetic – all forged around the original bones of the *WipEout* concept."

The approach taken by Nicky's team when designing the ships that would compete in *WipEout 2097*'s highly-stylised world was to build on concept artist Jim Bowers' *WipEout* designs, which as Nicky explains involved a variety of techniques. "The original ships were Jim's babies, the team names and pilots were Nick's. We built on these to develop new designs for *WipEout 2097*. Jim had made an amazing scale model of one of the ships, I think to help pitch the original idea – it was really the blueprint for everything else. It was down to the individual artists as to how the concepts were developed – they developed a mix of concept sketches or worked directly in the software, it was down to them."

While the production of *WipEout 2097*'s ships was largely down to Nicky and her artists, she shares credit for the creation of the game's courses with the title's designers and coders. "Building the circuits was very much an organic process – Nick and his team would develop initial ideas and plans, but it was left to the artists to create something that 'worked.' So we would build the tracks based on the plans, and create a 'flow' that felt natural, but we'd also create tricky turns to navigate and master. We had really fantastic in-house coders who wrote custom tools within Softimage to create these really easily, and they were really happy to refine [them] as we needed. We were able to tweak and change tracks to adjust the difficulty, or easily put in place huge leaps across chasms. The tracks were tested and tweaked – and then some – to make them as close to perfect as the designers wanted them. Everyone would play each others' tracks and give feedback, so in that way it was a group effort."



> **"I believe the success of WipEout came as a surprise to the Psygnosis/Sony executives. No sequel had been planned prior to its release"**
> Andy Satterthwaite

WIPEOUT 2097 REMIXED

A rundown of the WipEout 2097 ports



SATURN

■ Compromises were made when adapting *WipEout 2097* for the Saturn, and as a result it lacks the flair of the original. Most noticeably, it has blockier graphics and radically simplified visual effects. It also runs slightly slower and features none of the licensed acts found on the PlayStation version of *2097*'s soundtrack.



PC

■ A faithful port that runs at a higher resolution than that of its PlayStation counterpart. But as with the Saturn version, the PC *WipEout 2097*'s soundtrack is exclusively by Psygnosis in-house musician Tim Wright rather than featuring the illustrious Techno artists who helped give the original game so much of its cool.



MAC AND AMIGA

■ These late arrivals received near polar-opposite receptions. The Amiga *WipEout 2097* was the first commercial 3D-accelerated Amiga title and was lauded for its advanced visuals and effects, while the 2002-released Mac *WipEout 2097* was criticised for being outdated, buggy and not supporting some controllers.



»[PlayStation] A poorly placed racer tries to gain ground on the rainforest-located Valparaiso course.

As work progressed on *WipEout 2097*'s courses, producer Andy Satterthwaite set deadlines and calculated timescales, which resulted in him concluding that he could deliver more than the simple 'tracks disk' that he had been asked to produce. "The process for building tracks for the original was fairly well-defined. Nick Burcombe would design them on paper, the artists would make the tracks themselves in Softimage, it would be refined through playtests and then it would be 'skinned' to make the scenery. The 'skinning' process took about two man-months per track. We had to get the game out by October. Given our knowledge of the time-scale that things took, scheduling was pretty easy. We started at the beginning of January with one month to design and build 20 tracks, and then pick the best eight. Four track scenery artists, two tracks per artist and two months per track meant that all our 'track-skinning' should be finished by the start of June. Four weeks alpha, plus four weeks beta plus six weeks submission and manufacture equalled an October release. So that was the plan, except, what was I doing with the three coders in this time? It seemed foolish not to use them to make the game a heap better."

The combination of *WipEout 2097*'s tight deadline and Andy's sheer ambition resulted in pressure being placed on the game's developers, but rather than flounder they thrived, which lead artist Nicky attributes to focus and experience. "I think the deadline was purely down to marketing! The first game had been immensely successful and I think the deadline for *2097* was driven by a decision to capitalise on that. There was no denying it was pressured, but that pressure created a focus in the team and a desire to get things done and move on to the next thing. The team from the original formed the core of the newly expanded *WipEout 2097* team so we had developed a pretty good workflow by then."

THE DESIGNERS REPUBLIC Q&A

tDR's Ian Anderson on styling WipEout 2097



How did you originally become involved with Psygnosis/Studio Liverpool?
We were approached by *WipEout*'s author Nick Burcombe. When imagining the *WipEout* world, he was influenced by tDR's graphics so it was a natural move to ask us to realise his version of our vision. From supplying existing and creating new work for use in-game it was a logical progression to work with Sue Campbell on the packaging and brand development of the game.

Did they have specific ideas for *WipEout 2097*'s design or was it more collaborative?
WipEout 2097 is a consolidation and evolution of the visual language developed for the original game, based on the narrative positions set around 40 years on from *WipEout* itself. As we'd been given carte blanche to visualise the world in which *WipEout* existed, there was no need for anything more than cursory collaboration on *WipEout 2097* beyond synchronising the narrative.

How long did it take to create the artwork for *WipEout 2097*?
We developed and experimented with ideas as and when we had the ideas. In terms of delivering specific design assets both in-game and out – as well as booklet art and merchandise – probably around two to three weeks, with additional time spent co-directing and delivering the press/promotional campaign.

What tools did you use to create the main cover art?
Brains. Computers. Persuasion.

How do you go about creating a sense of speed when drawing art?
There are existing conventions such as italicised and /or (time) stretched typography and what *Eye* magazine called 'Go Faster Stripes'. There's also a sense of immediacy in the way some of the elements are created.

Where did the inspiration for the various logos / design come from?
Each team logo was an imagined evolution from the identities developed for the original game – we researched how real-world corporate IDs in general had advanced over an equivalent real time period, and applied the results with some additional fast history styling to create the new team branding for *2097*.

What did you think of the game compared to the original?
We viewed it purely as a logical evolution from the first in terms of our input – a scientific solution creatively expressed. I saw the gameplay as a playground for what tDR could have fun doing, a more fully realised proposition with an improved cohesive narrative.

Why do you think the art style remains so popular with gamers?
It was designed to.



»[PlayStation] A desperate racer deploys a Quake Disruptor on his nearest rival.





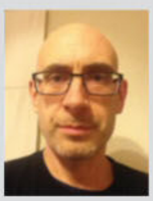
メイキング



»[PlayStation] A Feisar team racer leaves the starting grid of the Canadian Talon's Reach track.

MAKING GAMING 'COOL'

Andy Satterthwaite on launching WipEout 2097 with style



What are your memories of *WipEout 2097*'s UK launch at the hip nightclub, Cream?
I remember feeling completely out of my depth – I really wasn't a dance club guy. There were competition winners who'd won the chance to come to the launch and meet us. They wanted our autographs, which felt ridiculous because we didn't think of ourselves in that 'rock star' way. I think I just hung out by the bar until the Chemical Brothers came on, then danced a bit and went home drunk.

What was your involvement in the game's big Japanese launch?
I was flown out to Tokyo to do a press conference, largely consisting of playing the game on stage and answering questions through an interpreter. It was exciting and fun. I remember going to Akihabara to pick up Nintendo 64s to bring back – it was not yet released in the UK at the time – but it's all a bit vague!

The ambition of the *WipEout 2097* developers matched their experience, and their equally ambitious producer, Andy Satterthwaite, recalls their push to expand on *WipEout*, designer Nick Burcombe's desire to improve the handling of the original game's ships and the creation of an iconic weapon by new-starter Chris Roberts. "The original game had four manufacturers of ships so we upped it to five, it had two ships per manufacturer in a race so we upped it to three. So we now had up to 15 ships in a race. It had two classes of race speed, so we upped it to four. But the bulk of the improvements were based on Nick's designs for all the things he wanted to improve in the original – largely around handling – and the weapon improvements that Chris Roberts – one of the new coders – came up with, including the legendary 'Quake' weapon, which originated when he was messing around with the track generation code to see how it worked."

A slew of imaginative weapons and power-ups followed, which lead artist Nicky Place puts down to cross-discipline collaboration. "I remember this being an organic process – the designers would outline what they wanted in terms of what it would do, and how it should behave, and then how it should sit on the track or in the environment – the artists, and programmers, would then work to make it 'real'. There wasn't really a set way to do anything, it was a genuine collaboration across design, art and coding with much of it driven by the short deadline – which meant we were making decisions and refining techniques as we went along."

A key difference between *WipEout 2097*'s weapons and its predecessor's would be their ability to inflict damage or destroy other ships, which producer Andy Satterthwaite views as a natural progression. "This was

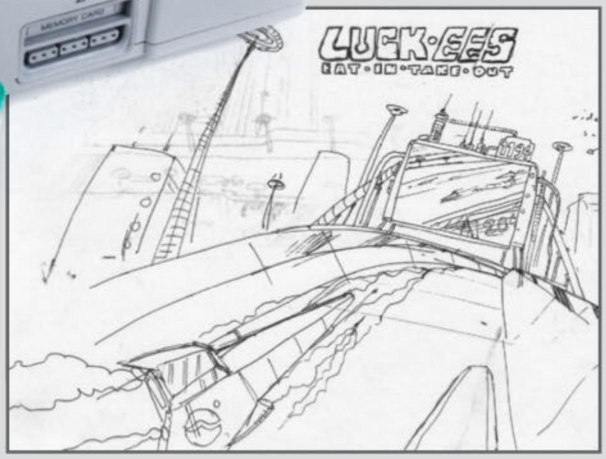


»[PlayStation] A giant, static airship hovers silently over two competitors tackling an unforgivingly tight bend.

one of the evolutions of the design that Nick wanted. It was an obvious step and made more difference between the vehicles – as you could have stronger, slower ones and faster, weaker ones. [And] if you could shoot them then you could destroy them… it seemed obvious. To be honest, the pit lanes were a bit crap, and the solution employed by one of the later *WipEout* sequels, where you could reabsorb a weapon to heal, rather than fire it, was far more elegant."

In terms of gameplay differences, none would have more effect than addressing *WipEout*'s punishing track edges, which brought ships to a standstill when flown into. But as Andy reveals, these were far from simple to correct. "Fixing this was our most-desired change for the gameplay. The 'insta-stop' of the original was far too punishing, we wanted to have 'scraping' instead. Part





of the problem was that *WipEout* ships are largely triangular; so that when they clipped the sides of the track the natural reaction was that they rotated toward the wall. We had to compensate for that by pushing the nose of the vehicle out enough to make it not constantly collide but not so much as to push the player back into the centre of the track. For some reason it took far longer to get right than it should have done. I seem to remember losing my cool with Nick when he'd failed to mention some edge-case problem and we were running out of time pretty rapidly. Thankfully, Dave Rose, who was head of code at this point – I think – had been one of the programmers on *WipEout*, came to the rescue and fixed it. Once it was working as intended it made all the difference."

Another gameplay tweak saw *WipEout 2097* receive a greater number of AI racers than the original, who, as Andy points out, demonstrated better lane discipline. "The extra competitors were largely a numbers game; up the number to increase the competition. The game was a moving obstacle course, so having more obstacles made it more entertaining. I don't remember us specifically improving the collision detection between vehicles, but it's possible we did improve the collision between AI racers and the track. In the original, the opponents would happily fly through the scenery!"

Time and effort was also spent on developing *WipEout 2097*'s modes, with the game's Time Trial mode and Link mode standing out most in Andy's memory for quite different reasons. "Only the European version of *WipEout 2097* had ghost vehicles in Time Trial because Atari had a patent on ghost vehicles at the time from *Hard Drivin'*, but it was only a US patent. The Link mode was a specific request from Sony – as I recall. It was a huge pain because we had to keep everything in sync for it to work, which meant the game could never frame out. As the US / NTSC version of the game had to run at 30fps – as opposed to the 25fps of the PAL / European version – this proved one of the toughest challenges. I don't think it was worth it from a user perspective – I believe only about 1,000 link cables were sold in the UK, for example. But it was good for reviews; *Official PlayStation Magazine* gave us 9/10 in their review – but 10/10 with the Link mode."

> **"[Checkpoints] prevented a new player taking forever. You could reduce frustration by booting the player out and getting them to start again"**
> Andy Satterthwaite

Equal consideration was given to the game's five ship types, with each given unique handling and a different top speed, which would then be increased or decreased depending on the racing class chosen pre-game, but Andy doesn't remember this causing too many headaches. "Tweaking the vehicles was pretty easy. The challenges were: 1) making all vehicles feel different and still worth it within a class – we wanted to make it possible to win in all of them making the choice of manufacturer more of a personal preference, though in reality you either went for Feisar for easy handling or Piranha for speed; everything else was pretty pointless. I think Nick preferred Qirex 'cause he's a masochist! And 2) making the AI vehicles work at the different classes … this is where Rob Francis came in. Nick was off designing another game at this point, so Rob came ▶



»A large number of storyboards were used while creating *WipEout 2097*. This is an overview of one of the tracks.



IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** Psygnosis/Sony
» **DEVELOPER:** Psygnosis
» **RELEASED:** 1996
» **PLATFORM:** Various
» **GENRE:** Racer



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

WIPEOUT (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: Various
YEAR: 1995

DESTRUCTION DERBY 2
SYSTEM: PlayStation, PC
YEAR: 1996

FORMULA 1 97
SYSTEM: PlayStation, PC
YEAR: 1997







メイキング

THE TRACKS OF WIPEOUT 2097

A course-by-course tour of WipEout 2097's world

1 TALON'S REACH Canada

■ Located in a dimly-lit industrial complex, Canada's Talon's Reach is a misshapen circular track surrounded on all sides by concrete, steel girders and exposed cabling. As *WipEout 2097*'s easiest course, Talon's Reach serves as a learning exercise for rookie racers in the art of air braking around corners.

2 SAGARMATHA Nepal

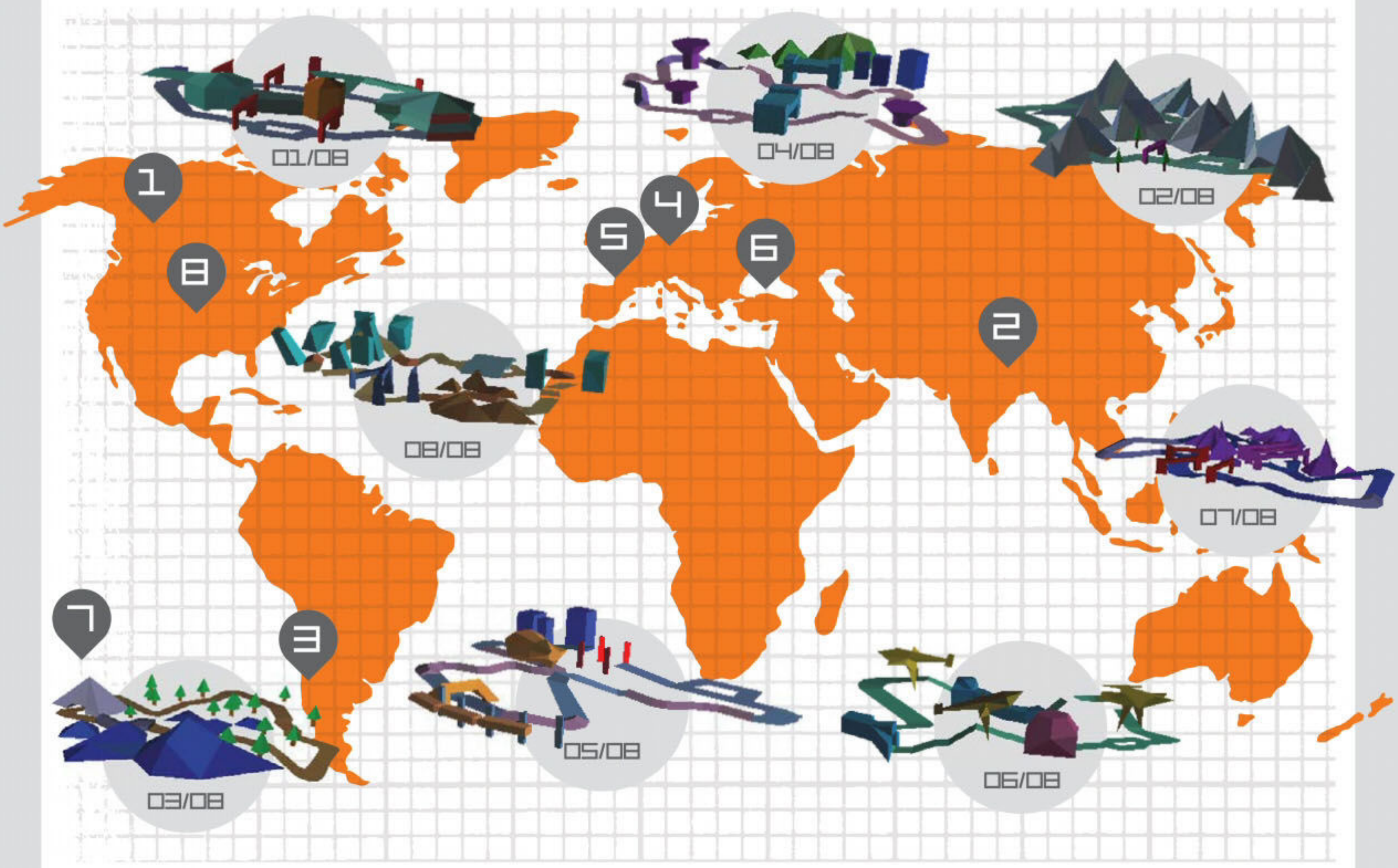
■ The snowy Nepalese mountaintop of Sagarmatha – better known in the West as Mount Everest – plays host to *WipEout 2097*'s second beginner track. A 'S' bend greets racers not far from the start and several tight bends follow. Sagarmatha also introduces racers to darkened tunnel flythroughs.

3 VALPARAISO Chile

■ Somewhat controversially sited in the South American rainforests of Chile, Valparaiso is the first of *WipEout 2097*'s intermediate courses. Boasting a tricky series of bends and a temple flythrough that gives very little room for error, Valparaiso provides *WipEout 2097* with its steepest difficulty curve.

4 PHENITIA PARK Germany

■ Built on the outskirts of Hamburg in a polluted business district, *WipEout 2097*'s other intermediate track, Phenitia Park, demands a different skillset to its counterpart Valparaiso. The course is defined by its uphill chicanes and jumps that require high speeds and perfect positioning to clear.



5 GARE D'EUROPA France

■ An abandoned metro line provides the backdrop for *WipEout 2097*'s atmospheric Gare d'Europa course. The first track of the game's third difficulty tier, Gare d'Europa crushes racers who don't learn its every twist and turn. Its showcase section rockets racers from a high tower down to the ground.

6 ODESSA KEYS Black Sea, Ukraine

■ Suspended over the Black Sea, the Ukrainian Odessa Keys track fulfils its third-level difficulty status by demanding split-second reactions from racers. 'S' bends that snake through neon-lit tunnels, jumps into near darkness and corkscrew ascents uphill provide some of Odessa Keys' more demanding challenges.

7 VOSTOK ISLAND Pacific Ocean

■ Based on a dormant volcano in the South Pacific, the experts-only Vostok Island course throws racers at a double figure of eight, over collapsed bridges and into an epic tunnel run. Although these hazards can be mastered, the brief countdowns between Vostok Island's checkpoints cut short all but perfect laps.

8 SPILSKINANKE America

■ The ultimate challenge offered by *WipEout 2097*, the fiendish Spilskinanke track runs through the broken remnants of an earthquake-stricken American city. Spilskinanke incorporates a twisted run through a dank sewer, a 90° bridge jump and a hairpin bend passing under a golden bridge.

▶ on and tweaked and tweaked and tweaked. We had to make it so that every racetrack at every class was a meaningful challenge with every manufacturers' vehicle. It took Rob months of work playing and replaying and rebalancing the AI to get this right. I still don't think I ever completed the Phantom class, but I do know it's possible – in theory!"

The basic mechanics underpinning *WipEout 2097* were also worked on, with perhaps the biggest departure from the original game coming in the form of checkpoints, which Andy hoped would help reduce frustration. "Checkpoints offered a few things: an arcade feel, a bit of extra pressure and they allowed us to display split times on the HUD. They prevented a new player taking forever when they were losing. With a checkpoint system you could reduce frustration by booting the player out and getting them to start again."

Given how crucial *WipEout*'s music had been to its success, an effort was put into securing top acts for *WipEout 2097*'s techno soundtrack. Andy regards this aspect of the game's production as yet another organic progression, "The music was a natural evolution of the work that had been done on the original – and again it was marketing working with the record label. The big push was the inclusion of *Firestarter* by the Prodigy, which came in late in the piece – but that was driven by Nick Burcombe rather than me."

Despite its strict deadline, the *WipEout 2097* team also found time to include a wealth of hidden content, such as faster modes, tougher tracks and an advanced prototype ship unlocked by winning races. They also created crazy weapons and vehicles that could be unlocked with the controller buttons. Lead artist Nicky Place chalks the extra content up to enthusiasm and stress release. "People would just come up with these ideas [that ranged] from really cool to pretty nuts and would build stuff as a bit of a respite from the pressure of the day-to-day – it was great, as everyone was up for getting this extra stuff in the game, despite it being extra work, everyone was just so into it. It was a period of great energy and immense exhaustion at the same time – it was just a lot of fun."

While fully endorsing these hidden extras, producer Andy did have one heart-stopping moment thanks to their inclusion as the completed *WipEout 2097* was presented to Sony. "Their purpose was to give the players something to work toward. The secret ships – alien, flying pig, etc. – and the other stuff was good nonsense to throw in at the end, though the minigun



»[PlayStation] Full acceleration and careful positioning are required to successfully make this hazardous jump.

nearly killed the game due to a last moment bug as we were submitting for Sony approval."

Following its approval, *WipEout 2097* launched to great critical acclaim and impressive sales numbers, for which Andy remembers receiving the thanks of both Psygnosis and Sony. "We sold about a million copies, so they must have been pretty happy – and I was given plenty of praise. They certainly made enough other sequels so it must have been worth it at some level!"

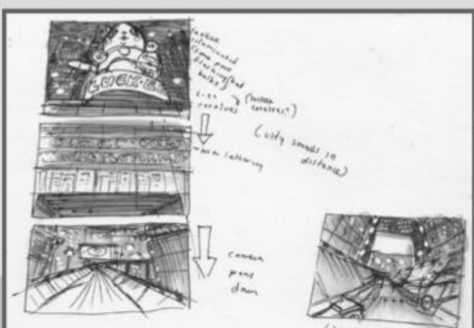
Subsequently, gaming pods loaded with *WipEout 2097* were installed in Cream – the very coolest of techno clubs. An arrangement Andy perceived as entirely reciprocal. "I think it was a mutual embrace – the game embraced the music, the music embraced the game, it was all fast and exciting, and new and flashy, and looked good on big TV screens."

Looking back at *WipEout 2097* now, lead artist Nicky views her work not only in terms of its cultural impact, but also its crossover appeal. "I still think it looks amazing as a whole entity. Technically it has obviously been way, way surpassed by new technologies, but I believe it's really stood the test of time as a cultural piece. I also created the *2097* intro with Jim Bowers and I still think it looks incredible. I'm hugely proud to have been part of such an exciting and culturally important piece – I meet people all the time who tell me how it was their favourite game, or it got them into dance music, or into games, or a multitude of things – it's just been so influential."

When asked to review his first production, Andy relives the spectrum of emotions he felt while guiding *WipEout 2097*'s development and finishes on a note as upbeat as any on the game's soundtrack. "With hindsight, it was ridiculously stressful, stupidly fun and very simple all at the same time. I had an amazing team, a product I loved, a very understanding fiancé and a very understated goal to make a 'tracks disk', which just gave us every chance to excel expectations. I still have people asking about it now, so how can I not be proud of it? But really it was a product of a fantastic team working bloody hard on a product we believed in with minimal management interference – if you've got that you can do anything." *

Many thanks to Andy Satterthwaite and Nicky Place for revisiting *WipEout 2097*.

"We would build the tracks based on the plans, and create a 'flow' that felt natural, but also create tricky turns to navigate and master"
Nicky Place


» More concept work, this time of the mascot intro scene.



»[PlayStation] A golden bridge spans the first of several tight chicanes facing a pair of competitors.



ZX Spectrum +2

» **MANUFACTURER:** AMSTRAD » **YEAR:** NOVEMBER 1986 » **COST:** £149 (LAUNCH), £30+ (TODAY)

When Amstrad bought the Sinclair brand name and the ZX Spectrum along with it in 1986, it's understandable that there would be fear, uncertainty and doubt over the future of Britain's most popular computer. However, Amstrad's first impression as a steward of the brand was a positive one – the ZX Spectrum +2 added some rather splendid new features to the existing ZX Spectrum 128K base. The biggest was the inclusion of a built-in tape deck, known as the Datacorder as it had been on Amstrad's computers. While it didn't have a tape counter (a fairly big oversight), it did mean that there was no more need to mess around with volume controls.

The other big new feature was the first-time inclusion of joystick ports, which conformed to the Sinclair Interface II protocol. However, Amstrad changed the pin-out of the joysticks, meaning that you'd either have to buy a converter or one of the new SJS1 joysticks introduced by Amstrad. The machine also looks a lot less cluttered thanks to the omission of the BASIC keywords that had always been dotted around the keyboard of older models, but you'll be hard-pressed to program in 48K mode as a result. *



Hardware fact

■ The revised ZX Spectrum +2A used the same motherboard as the ZX Spectrum +3. The BIOS detected which machine it was being used in by checking the attached storage devices.



RAM: 128KB

PROCESSOR: Z80A (3.55MHZ)

AUDIO: AY-3-8192 SOUND CHIP (3 CHANNEL, 8 OCTAVE)

OPERATING SYSTEM: 32KB ZX SPECTRUM +2 BIOS ROM

FORMAT: BUILT-IN CASSETTE TAPE DRIVE, SUPPORT FOR OTHERS THROUGH EXPANSION PORT



ESSENTIAL GAME

Midnight Resistance

As games grew more demanding into the late Eighties and early Nineties, the added capabilities of 128K Spectrum models were necessary to ensure the best experience – and that was especially true of arcade conversions. Sure, you could play *Midnight Resistance* on a 48K Spectrum, but the 128K version was the version of choice thanks to its music and the fact that all of the levels loaded in one go. Additionally, with the +2 you could get joystick control without having to fork out for the Interface II, which was essential for a game like *Midnight Resistance*.

TRANTOR THE LAST STORM TROOPER

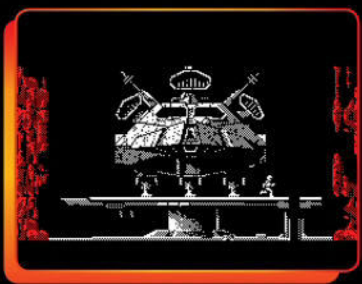
Although pitched as a budget game, Trantor ended up as a full-price launch title for U.S. Gold's 'Go!' label. Nick Bruty tells Rory Milne how he created his 8-bit classic with David Quinn and David Perry

A brief encounter with his school's ZX81 at the tender age of 13 instantly sold Nick Bruty on computers. By the time he hit 15, Nick dreamed of being a professional games programmer. Although this dream would go unrealised, sprites the teenager produced for a demo coded by school friend David Quinn did help secure employment for the pair. But as Nick explains, he was hired for his artistic skill rather than his coding ability. "David Quinn and I first got into game development at Softstone in Brighton. My brain was more suited to art and design than coding, and I could get so many more projects done than I could being a programmer. Softstone went bust after a year, so we headed back to London. David landed at Probe Software. I think he may have been the first in-house programmer. He was working on a horse racing game and they needed artwork, so he brought me in."

In the mid-Eighties, Probe Software was a relatively small operation, but Nick has memories of their limited office space accommodating sizable arcade cabinets. "Probe's first office was in Tooting, London and was tiny. Probe was converting a lot of arcade games back then, and my favourite moments were having the arcades delivered to the office. Often we would get the full-sized four-player cabinets!"

But before joining Probe, Nick and David had started work on a budget arcade title, and the friends ran the idea past their new boss. "I had begun working on *Trantor* while between jobs. I pitched it to David and he was keen, so we started in earnest thinking it would be a fine budget title. When we started working at Probe, we showed Fergus what we had and he became excited and wanted us to make a full-price game. The '*Trantor*' name came early; it was a planet in an L. Ron Hubbard book."

As well as his game's title, Nick also looked to sci-fi to inspire *Trantor*'s core alien-blasting gameplay and the backstory to his hero's mission. "I can't remember if I made the game after I saw *Aliens* – if I saw *Aliens* first then it would definitely have been an influence. I remember one of the first films I saw with David was *The Terminator* and it



» [ZX Spectrum] Trantor runs from his disintegrating ship, clearing its blast-zone with seconds to spare.



» [Amstrad] An energy-depleted Trantor sprints to reach a terminal rather than engaging in a firefight.

blew us both away. I loved the adventure of *Star Wars*, but the realistic feel of *Alien* and *Blade Runner* affected me more. They were dark and scary but entirely beautiful. I was reading a lot of sci-fi back then: Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke. I was no writer, but making the game was a fun excuse for me to write a short story."

In order to get his ideas on the screen, Nick made use of in-house sprite and level editors rather than laboriously transcribing squared paper designs into hexadecimal code. "In the past, I had used graph paper and hex. Man, that was slow work. Thankfully, David Quinn made a nice sprite editor tool that sped everything up. I made sure David's tool had animation. It was still a slow process to draw anything as there were no mice or tablets yet; I would draw with my old Atari 2600 joystick. I really didn't want to go back and modify anything if I didn't have to – the animation you see in the game is pretty much the first pass I did. I had a very simple level editor. They were very common back then and typically grew in complexity from game to game."

Prior to *Trantor*, Nick had created graphics for others that had to fit into a fixed amount of memory, but now his designer status allowed him to favour art over other considerations and to create a cinematic intro. "In my first year in games, I was told how much memory I could use, which was never enough to do what I wanted. As *Trantor* was my first design, I thought: 'Screw it. I'm going to blow the entire memory on art and keep the game simple.' We pulled a trick with the ship. As it was the first thing you see in the game we made sure it was the last thing loaded. It only ever existed on the screen not in memory."

While keeping *Trantor* a run-and-gun at its core, Nick embellished his game with as many logistical challenges as memory would allow ranging from flame-thrower refuels to raiding lockers for essential items. "I love action games, but I also like to have some sense of adventure and discovery. [But] I was out of memory and had to settle for simple triggers rather than grand events. I would have loved to have had differently-scaled areas in the game. The close-up view you had would be the sprint between these special areas. At first, these would be straightforward places ▶

"I pitched it to David and he was keen, so we started in earnest thinking it would be a fine budget title" Nick Bruty



IN THE KNOW

- **» PUBLISHER:** US GOLD
- **» DEVELOPER:** PROBE
- **» RELEASED:** 1987
- **» PLATFORM:** VARIOUS
- **» GENRE:** RUN-AND-GUN



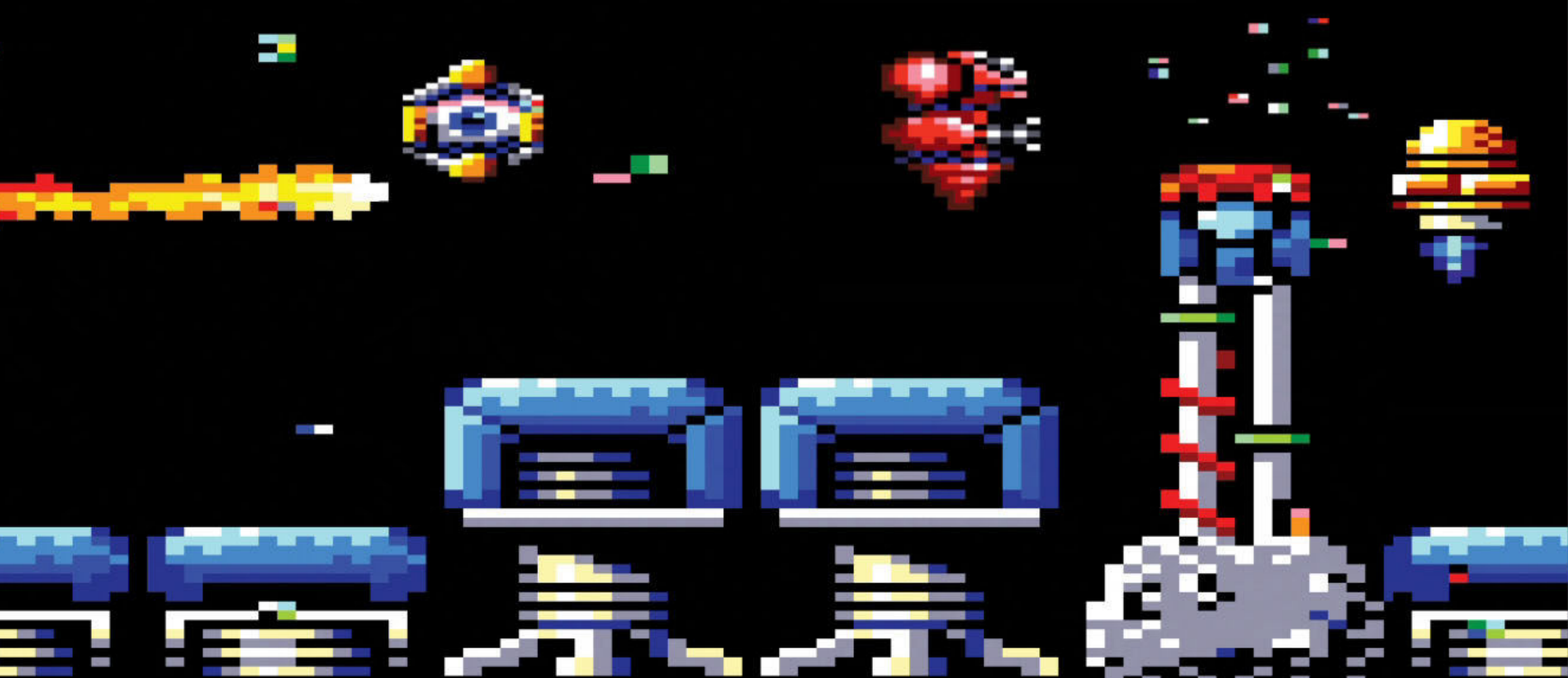
DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

EXTREME
SYSTEM: ZX Spectrum
YEAR: 1991

DISNEY'S ALADDIN
SYSTEM: Mega Drive, Various
YEAR: 1993

EARTHWORM JIM (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: Mega Drive, Various
YEAR: 1994





ONE MAN ARMIES

More great games featuring hardcore super soldiers

GUNFORCE



■ Brutally hard and singularly unforgiving, Irem's coin-op run-and-gun is like *Contra*, but with bullet-hell elements. That's not to say that *GunForce* sets impossible goals, but its dual requirements of staying in constant motion while avoiding multidirectional gunfire are tricky to reconcile.

ASSAULT SUITS VALKEN



■ A run-and-gun for the most part, with shoot-'em-up interludes, *Assault Suits Valken* pits an armoured mech warrior against an army of droids and their fleet of gargantuan spacecraft. The game delivers well-worked levels and imaginative set-piece bosses throughout.

DOOM TROOPERS



■ The unlikely challenge presented by *Doom Troopers* is to play a lone human or alien soldier waging guerrilla warfare on a robot planet. Tough platforming sections requiring considered thought nicely complement the core run-and-gun gameplay that defines the game.

MILLENNIUM SOLDIER: EXPENDABLE



■ Taking inspiration from *Robotron*, *Gauntlet* and *Doom*, *Millennium Soldier* skilfully transitions the run-and-gun from two dimensions to the third-person perspective. Its dystopian world, titanic bosses and wanton destruction are a celebration of late-Nineties PC visuals.

▶ like hangers and munitions dumps where you would perform some of the logic tasks allowing you to progress. The deeper down in the world, the stranger and more alien things would get."

To crank up *Trantor*'s tension levels, Nick gave his game's hero just 90 seconds to find each stage's security terminal and retrieve password characters in anagram form, and he turned *Trantor*'s levels into a sprawling maze by connecting them with a lift system. "I did want the game to feel tense from the outset. You are in hostile territory and on a mission. In retrospect, I would have done this in other ways rather than just time pressure. I imagined if I was on a mission like this I would come across a variety of tasks. I liked having the variation to help break up the action, and these types of puzzles were a low cost in memory."



» David Perry

The combination of time-sensitive puzzles with intense firefights left *Trantor* on the difficult side, which, in hindsight, Nick regrets. "If I had more resources to make the exploration more interesting I would have eased the difficulty down. As the game felt 'light' in that area we focused on keeping the action up, but I didn't mean it to be quite so difficult."

As well as balancing *Trantor*'s gameplay, Nick also found himself working on an Amstrad version of his unfinished Spectrum title with a star coder who had just gone freelance. "There was an overlap," Nick explains, "but David Perry coded so fast he finished at the same time as the Spectrum. The game itself was largely set in place by the time he was on it. I'm sure if he had started at the beginning we would have had a few more features in."

Although he recalls coding the Amstrad *Trantor* faster than Nick does, David Perry cites the artist's graphics as his reason for taking on the conversion. "I resigned from Mikro-Gen and Fergus McGovern asked me to visit him at Probe. He ended up offering me a conversion project called '*Trantor: The Last Stormtrooper*.' I took it as I was amazed by the artwork. I had made a flexible engine, so I caught up with the

> **"The biggest challenge was the enormous character! It was unusual to go so graphically heavy with the game, but I loved the challenge"** David Perry

programmer on Spectrum and ended up finishing the game on Amstrad first."

The graphics Nick created for the Amstrad version did cause David a few headaches, but the coder remembers relishing the challenge and working with his artist colleague to produce stunning visual effects. "It was coded from scratch on the Amstrad, and the biggest challenge was the *enormous* character! It was unusual to go so graphically heavy with the game, but I loved the challenge. I was one of those people that appreciated talent. When you do that you get the best out of people. Nick was no exception. He'd tell me what he needed and I'd make it happen."

But despite the Amstrad *Trantor*'s colourful graphics, Nick Bruty isn't certain that it's the definitive version. "In terms of features, yes, but I always struggled with the Amstrad's double-pixel mode. The colours helped compensate, but I preferred the Spectrum's resolution. What really surprised me was how fast David Perry's Amstrad version ran. Typically conversions were slower on the Amstrad, but it was slightly faster allowing the action to feel more fluid."


» Nick Bruty

Trantor received sparkling reviews at the time, but Nick notes that his game's fortunes didn't reflect its critical acclaim. "I was very happy with the response. It was a great first experience for me. The commercial success is disputed, though. I have never seen final sales figures."

Slightly less successful conversions followed, which Nick has only now looked over. "The C64 looks to be the smoothest, although the palette is muted so it lacks some visual punch. The MSX version reminds me of the Amstrad with its colour and resolution although its frame-rate is lower. The Atari ST port is a disappointment. Technically it seems fine, but the art is terrible. As for the DOS one, my eyes are bleeding with that terrible four-colour mode!"

Ports aside, the original *Trantor* teased a sequel, but Nick reveals that his ideas for *Trantor II* were never acted on. "Sadly no work was ever started. If we had switched to the Amiga / ST then I would have tried a co-op version. I liked the idea of players having to cover each other. For this to work I would have had to pull the camera out further. David Perry and I worked as a team for many years after *Trantor*, so the sequel would have been made by bot of us."

When asked if he would change *Trantor*, Nick offers a number of tweaks, but his final words express pleasure at how well his game is still thought of. "I would make the action more directional, not just horizontal. I would allow you to clear out areas and change the way the time pressure works. I'm delighted how well it's thought of – it makes me want to go back and revisit the genre!" ★

Thanks to Nick Bruty and David Perry for finding time to talk about *Trantor*.


» [ZX Spectrum] Energy-sapping pistons prove as hazardous to Trantor's health as the aliens he encounters.


» [Amstrad] Surrounded by aliens, Trantor has no choice but to take them all out or die trying.


» [ZX Spectrum] Collectable shields found in lockers give Trantor brief spells of protection.

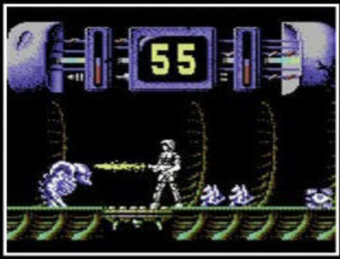


TRANTOR: THE LAST STORMTROOPER 101

■ Far from a straightforward run-and-gun, *Trantor* requires split-second timing and skilful multitasking rather than frenetic trigger-happy carnage. Avoiding the game's deadly scenery and energy-depleting foes requires care and quick reactions, but the real challenge is keeping *Trantor*'s timer, energy and fuel level above zero.



CONVERSION CAPERS A run (and gun) through the Trantor ports



C64

■ Graphically closer to the Spectrum than the Amstrad *Trantor*, the C64 version lacks the original's deadly pistons and stalagmites but adds atmospheric in-game music. The lack of interactive scenery diminishes the gameplay slightly, but otherwise this is a faithful port.



MSX

■ An adaptation rather than a recreation of the Spectrum *Trantor*, the stormtrooper's MSX mission is more garish and features gameplay tweaks. It has fewer aliens, which is an improvement, but there are also unavoidable pistons that unfairly drain Trantor's energy.



ATARI ST

■ The most visually advanced *Trantor*, if not the most stylish, the ST port is unfortunately too easy thanks to a few ill-advised changes to the gameplay. Like the C64 *Trantor*, there are no pistons or stalagmites, but there's also too much space to pick off aliens.



DOS

■ Given that the DOS *Trantor* is rendered in four colours it really doesn't look bad, although *Trantor* is a little podgy! Visuals aside, the PC conversion is an accurate one, which delivers the stiffest challenge of any version thanks to its numerous, relentless foes.



Long before The King Of Fighters and Metal Slug, Ikari Warriors spearheaded SNK's assault on the arcades. Martyn Carroll looks back at the incendiary series and its explosive spin-offs



The best game based on the hit movie *Rambo: First Blood Part II* was not Ocean Software's memorable home computer version. Nor was it the very odd NES version by Japanese developer Pack-In-Video where Rambo was bothered by snakes and spiders. And it certainly wasn't Angelsoft's text adventure for the US market. No, the best game based on *Rambo* was *Ikari Warriors*.

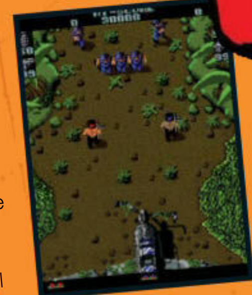
For its 1986 coin-op SNK didn't obtain the licence but the inspiration is obvious. The film was released as *Rambo: Ikari No Dasshutsu* (*The Furious Escape*), so 'Ikari' was purposely chosen as the game's Japanese title. What's more the game's main character, Ralf, is clearly modelled on Rambo, right down to his wild hair and red bandana. And if any doubt existed, the game's designer Keiko Iju has since revealed that "half-naked Rambos" were a specific requirement.

Rambos. Plural. In SNK's version of events, Ralf is joined by war buddy Clark, distinguishable by his blue bandana. The pair embark on an improbable mission to bust a comrade out of an enemy stronghold when their plane is shot down on approach. They crash into jungle and must advance to their objective on foot – with an enemy battalion or two standing in their way.

While the characters and story elements were inspired by *Rambo*, the gameplay was indebted to Capcom's *Commando* which was released the previous year. Players pushed up the screen, felling enemies in a hail of gunfire and grenades as they negotiated a series of fortified areas. But this was more than just *Commando* with co-op play. There were weapon upgrades for a start, such as piercing ammo, which could drop multiple enemies, and special grenades, which had a wider blast radius.

Even better were the tanks, which players could hop into for temporary protection. Once behind the wheel you could also mow down enemies, while the turrets came in handy against enemy tanks, helicopters and other mechanised foes. "If you haven't seen *Ikari* then you're in for a nice surprise," wrote *Computer & Video Games* magazine at the time, before summing up the game perfectly. "It takes the *Commando*/*Rambo* theme and puts it into overdrive."

To redress the odds a little in your favour the game utilised a rotary control system where you could move the ▶

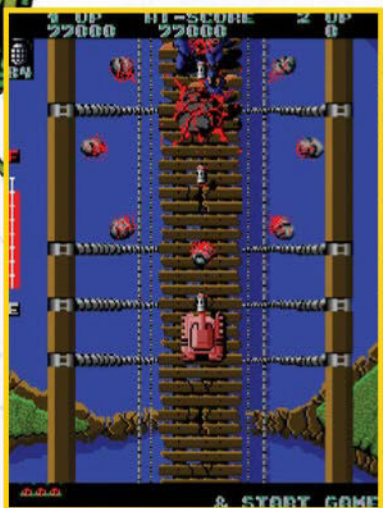


"The game's main character, Ralf, is clearly modelled on Rambo, right down to his wild hair and red bandana"

> **"Instead of a hot tropical jungle Ralf and Clark were transported to the cold depths of space"**



» [Arcade] The angry rock face things! A little taste of the weirdness that would come in Victory Road.



» [Arcade] Preserve lives by staying in your tank for as long as possible.



» [Arcade] Those pesky mines in the water can ruin your day real quick. Same goes for the enemy choppers.



» [Arcade] Two players should make progress easier, although differing playing styles can complicate matters.

▶ player while independently aiming their gun. It was basically a single stick with an octagonal spinner on top. With a little practice you'd soon be moving and rotating with one hand and hammering the fire buttons with the other. It worked rather well. This novel approach was praised at the time of the game's release, but it wasn't the first SNK title to adopt it. And neither was it the debut outing for Colonel Ralf.

Released by SNK in 1985, *TNK III* was a single-player shooter where players piloted a tank through enemy territory. Using the nifty rotary controller you could control the turret and the tank's movements, allowing you to retreat from enemies while returning fire. The main objective was to advance towards the enemy HQ at the top of the map, but the screen also scrolled left and right (wrapping around at each edge). This allowed for simple maze elements as you negotiated buildings and terrain that blocked your way. Although the setting was World War II the tank's captain was Colonel Ralf and *TNK III* served as his first tour of duty – one that would soon be eclipsed once partnered with Clark.

TNK III was a confusing title for an original game so it was released in the west as simply *Tank*. *Ikari* was also renamed for its western release, becoming *Ikari Warriors* ('Ikari' was repurposed to be the name of the enemy village). Publisher Tradewest made other changes too. For some reason Ralf and Clark were rechristened Paul and Vince, making them sound more like an Eighties synth duo than an army of two. A more sensible change was the removal of the swastika symbols that adorned the boss's base in the original game.

Such was the popularity of *Ikari Warriors* in the arcades it soon invaded homes, arriving on no less than 12 platforms – more than any other SNK title before or since. The Famicom/NES version was the first to arrive, but that's not the only reason it deserves a special mention. Developer Micronics introduced many changes, including new enemies, unique power-ups and the ability to pilot choppers as well as tanks. The key difference, however, was that the game was much longer, taking about three times longer to complete than the arcade version. There was even a bizarre coda added to the end of the game: having defeated the feeble zombie boss at the enemy HQ, a speculative grenade would open up a secret staircase that led down to the final stage and a true boss in the form of a smug, fire-splitting skull.



» [Arcade] The 'boss' is like something out of a horror film. Destroy his life support and he turns into a pile of goo.

The initial home computer versions were developed by Quicksilver Software as part of a publishing deal with Data East USA. The PC and Apple II conversions were acceptable given the host hardware, but the hotly-anticipated Commodore 64 version was a disaster. Many of the coin-op's features (including co-op play) were MIA and the original's playability was AWOL.

Elite Systems snapped up the licence in Europe and lined up versions for most home computers. Elite had experienced considerable success with its versions of *Commando* so it was a smart acquisition. "*Ikari Warriors* took fire-and-rush gameplay to a new place," says Elite boss Steve Wilcox. "Its twisting joysticks, simultaneous two-player option and *Rambo*-esque central characters made its selection for conversion a no-brainer for Elite." Steve reveals that Elite's relationship with SNK was very good. "Our contacts at SNK were a joy to deal with. They allowed us to interpret the home versions with an absolute minimum of interference."

Elite got off to a flying start with an excellent version for the Amstrad CPC. Coded by David Shea, who had never used a CPC before he got the job, he nonetheless produced a faithful and polished game in just six weeks. However Elite struggled to get the other versions out the door. Dave Perry began work on the Spectrum version and it was previewed in several magazines before it was canned because Elite wasn't happy with it. David Shea was later called on to convert his CPC code to the Spectrum.

As for the C64, Elite wisely ignored Quicksilver's earlier attempt and commissioned John Twiddy to code a new version. At the time John was juggling university and *The Last Ninja* for System 3 so work on *Ikari Warriors* dragged on. In the end the game was late (launching in March 1988) but it was worth the wait, being up there with the best conversions to grace the C64.

There was a feeling in the press that Elite had missed the boat with these conversions as the appetite for *Commando* clones was wearing thin. Undeterred Elite put out a decent version for the Commodore 16 and then in late 1988 finally debuted the game on the 16-bits. "It was simply a resource issue," says Steve Wilcox. "One of ▶



» The cabinet is a thing of beauty, with fantastic side art. This particular machine belongs to **Retro Gamer** reader, Charles Bingham.

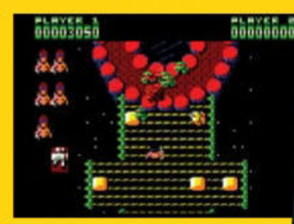
THE REVOLUTIONARY CONTROLLER

For the true arcade-at-home experience you needed to take 'Special' measures

One of the key features of the *Ikari* arcade series were the rotary controls yet this couldn't be replicated at home. That was until peripheral manufacturer Cheetah released an enhanced version of its popular 125 joystick titled the 125 Special. Looking suspiciously like a standard 125, the Special had two unique additions. The first was that the four fire buttons could each be independently programmed – the idea being that gamers would no longer have to push up for jump or tap the space bar with their toes while using a joystick. The other main feature was that the actual stick could be twisted, making it perfect for games of the *Ikari* ilk.

Cheetah unveiled the 125 Special at the Personal Computer Show in September 1987 and promised that software support was coming. Nothing of note happened until early 1989 and the arrival of Ocean's *Guerrilla War* conversion. The Commodore 64 and Spectrum versions included support for the Special, allowing players to rotate left and right without using the keyboard. This was followed by Ocean's home release of *Victory Road* where the Spectrum and Amstrad versions supported the device. Cheetah's stick was no match for the original coin-op controls but it was the closest you were going to get on a home computer. Few other games supported the Special – *Flying Shark* and *Run The Gauntlet* were two others – and these days it's almost forgotten. Almost.







DEVELOPER Q&A

Gerald Weatherup talks about coding Ikari Warriors predecessor Tank for the Spectrum and Amstrad CPC





How did you get the job of coding *Tank* for Ocean?
I was working for Choice Software in Carrickfergus, Northern Ireland at the time. The office was about 15 minutes' walk from my home. I started when I was 15 years old as a hobby summer job and took a full-time job when I was 16. Ocean subcontracted many conversions over the years to Choice and *Tank* came along in 1987. It took us about three to six months to do the conversion.

Did you have access to the coin-op machine during the development?
Yes we had the coin-op and it's what we used for reference. The graphics all came from the arcade machine. Choice owner Colin Gordon was an electronics whizz and he was able to pull things apart. We pulled all the ROMs, downloaded the content and searched for all the graphics. We became experts at recolouring the graphics. Then it was just a matter of putting the animations together. None of the team could really draw – pushing pixels around and converting things was about our limit.

The coin-op featured a rotary controller. This must have been a challenge to replicate on the home computers?
That was one of the big things that I wanted to achieve, to make the feel of the game as close as possible to the original. After trying various methods it seemed sensible and logical to use two handed-keyboard controls or a combination of joystick and keyboard.

Was it a smooth project, or were there any issues that complicated things?
Tight timescales and the amount of graphics to convert where the main challenges. I remember doing the graphics for both the Spectrum and



Amstrad versions at the same time. I can't recall if we did the coding at the same time but if it wasn't in tandem then it was back-to-back for sure.

The game seemed to receive a limited release, although it was included on later compilations. Can you remember the reason behind this? Was it a publisher decision?
Yes that was completely a publisher decision, Choice was only contracted to do the conversion. It was a real shame because I thought it was a good conversion of a great game.

Elite's engineers, Richard Frankish, oversaw many of Elite's ST and Amiga conversions and I recall that at more than one point they were queued up."

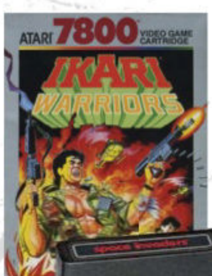
The Atari ST and Amiga versions were developed by Micro Wish and they were both admirably close to the coin-op, right down to the attract mode and the plane crash scene. The only thing missing were the rotary controls. The MSX-2 and Atari 7800 versions, developed by SNK and Atari respectively, also deserve credit for rekindling the thrills of the coin-op at home. The 2600 version was about as explosive as a wet firework, though.

While home versions continued to appear for years after the coin-op debut of *Ikari Warriors*, SNK wasted little time in trotting out an arcade sequel. In fact it arrived just six months after the original. Released in Japan as *Dogosoken*, the title literally translated as '*Bellowing Atmosphere*', which isn't as silly as it sounds once you play the game. Instead of a hot tropical jungle Ralf and Clark were transported to the cold depths of space where they were pitted against a deadly alien race.

The change in setting was possibly inspired by the movie *Aliens*, yet there was nothing sinister or frightening about the creatures you faced. Indeed, they were more like something out of James Cameron's earlier flick *Piranha II: The Spawning*. There were winged beasts, jumping spiders, killer crabs and funny green things everywhere. *Ikari Warriors* did have fantasy elements – the arrow-spitting rock faces spring to mind – but this was so far removed from the original it was ridiculous. Story and setting aside, the gameplay was largely the same. There were some new power-ups and weapons, and the tanks were swapped out for body armour, but it was still Ralf and Clark shooting stuff. Boss battles were thrown in, yet they merely



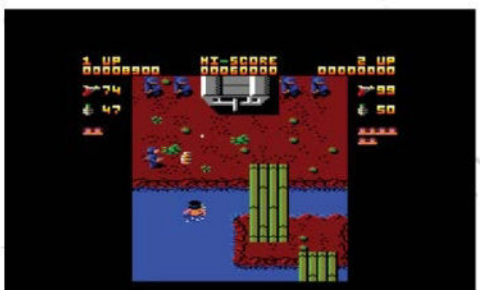
» [Arcade] Before *Ikari Warriors* there was *Tank*, the game that introduced SNK's rotary control system.







» [7800] It didn't arrive until 1989 but the Atari 7800 version was one of the best conversions available.



» [Amstrad] The Amstrad version of *Ikari Warriors* was a game CPC fans could be proud of.



»Some early artwork for SNK's *Ikari Warriors* sequel, *Victory Road*.



» [Arcade] You begin *Victory Road* carrying a rocket launcher, which was pretty cool.



» [Arcade] As you attempt to push on you are continually dragged into boss battles.



» [Arcade] *Ikari III* is a violent game where every attack produces a spray of blood.

> **"David Bean and I stepped in and wrote the game over the course of a week at the Quicksilver offices"**
> Lennard Feddersen

added to the irritation as you were forced to battle the same bosses over and over.

In the West the game was rebranded as *Victory Road*. Staff from *Crash* magazine encountered the coin-op at the Blackpool Amusements Exhibition in February 1987 and were rather unimpressed, calling it "boring". They said: "The game could best be described as *Ikari Warriors* in space. It's little more than a change of graphics supported by a change of scenario."

Any indifference to the coin-op didn't deter licensees and the game was converted to multiple home systems. As part of its ongoing deal with Data East, Quicksilver Software once again handled the PC, Apple II and C64 versions and the results were pretty poor. Lennard Feddersen worked on the C64 version for Quicksilver and explains that it was an unintentional rush job. "*Victory Road* was a crazy project," he says. "The original contractor had some unforeseen events happen in his life and David Bean and I stepped in and wrote the game over the course of a week or so at the Quicksilver offices using a scrolling engine that I'd written for another game. There wasn't a lot of time to play the arcade game so we looked at a video playthrough to figure out critter behaviours. At the end of the project Bill Fisher, the owner of Quicksilver, came in with some speech code and dropped speech into the game. I think it took us ten days in total and not much sleep occurred for a bit." Despite the truncated development the game still managed to be a step up from Quicksilver's Commodore 64 version of the original.

The NES version again added a bunch of features. The main change was that players now had an energy bar rather than lives. Less successful was the introduction of RPG elements where currency could be earned and spent in 'shops'. Crucially the game suffered from clunky controls that made it a chore to play. Interestingly the NES version was marketed as a sequel and was even titled *Ikari Warriors II: Victory Road*. Data East also drew attention to the first game, splashing,"The new *Ikari Warriors* adventure!" on the cover. Ocean Software, meanwhile, picked up the home computer rights – along with several other SNK titles including *Athena*, *Psycho Soldier* and *Ikari* predecessor *Tank* – and seemed to go out of its way to distance the game from the original. There was no mention of the Warriors and the blurb mentioned 'vampires', 'monsters' and 'eldritch horrors'.

The versions themselves were a mixed bag. Ocean called on David ►



» [Arcade] It's easy to see how *Tank* inspired the look and feel of *Ikari Warriors*.

BEFORE THE NEO-GEO

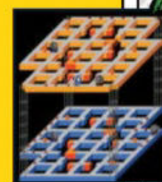
Seven early arcade games that defined SNK

VANGUARD 1981



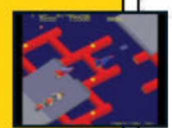
■ An early shooter, co-developed by SNK and TOSE. It's similar to Konami's *Scramble*, released the same year, only with four separate fire buttons (one for each direction). A breakthrough title for SNK; a sequel followed three years later.

MARVIN'S MAZE 1983



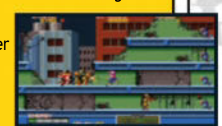
■ A typical maze game separated from the pack thanks to utilising two isometric mazes stacked on top of each other. Pipes connected the planes so you could travel between them, dodging the robots that had darkened poor Marv's day.

MAD CRASHER 1984



■ This little-known racer is best described as *Zaxxon* featuring the Light Cycles from *Tron*. You race along a highway suspended above a futuristic city, shooting enemy cycles and jumping gaps in the road. It lacked long-term appeal but was worth a few credits.

PSYCHO SOLDIER 1986



■ *Athena* was a whimsical platformer with shooting elements, while this, the sequel, was the opposite – a frantic shooter with a platforming façade. The music, featuring an actual vocal track, added to the game's charm.

POW: PRISONERS OF WAR 1988



■ The success of *Double Dragon* led SNK to produce its own brawler, featuring a couple of soldiers (attired in blue and red) busting out of prison using their fists, feet and the odd weapon. Never had so many skulls been cracked in a single game.

PREHISTORIC ISLE IN 1930 1989



■ This was a breath of fresh air from all the war and space shooters. Dinosaurs and other extinct beasties were on the menu as you guided biplanes through a land that time forgot. Great graphics, solid gameplay and good humour singled this one out.

BEAST BUSTERS 1989



■ At the end of the first stage of *Beast Busters* – SNK's on-rails *Splatterpunk* shooter – you fought a blue, knife-flinging zombie who transformed into a golden werewolf that emitted fire from its bottom. And that was pretty ordinary for this game.

Shea to update his code and he returned accurate releases for the Amstrad CPC and Spectrum. The 16-bit versions were once again handed to Micro Wish who produced a surprisingly poor effort that failed to even replicate the lukewarm thrills of the coin-op. Ocean planned its own C64 version for Europe but it was reported that two separate attempts were started but ultimately canned.

Ocean also dilly-dallied over its version of SNK's *Tank*. The firm contracted Choice Software to convert the coin-op to 8-bit machines but the game received a limited release before gaining exposure on compilations and cover-tapes. It did receive a full release on the NES in 1988 where it was known as *Iron Tank*. This version expanded on the coin-op in several ways: the map was much bigger with branching paths through it and there were multiple boss battles. It was far superior to the earlier *Ikari* games on the NES – and even better was to come.

The series continued in the arcades with a third *Ikari* game and one which was actually titled *Ikari III*. Let us explain.

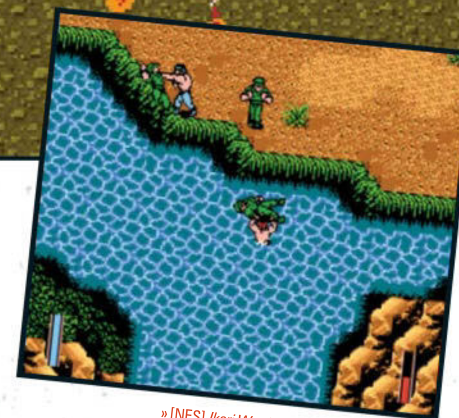
In 1988 SNK debuted *Guevara* in Japanese arcades. The game was based on the Cuban Revolution of the Fifties and, true to history, players controlled Che Guevara and Fidel Castro on their mission to overthrow the government.

The game itself was clearly an extension of *Ikari Warriors*, right down to the rotary controls, the colour-coded enemy soldiers and even the little tanks with the word 'IN' flashing on them. The key difference was the graphics, which were larger and more detailed. When the game was localised for the west it was renamed *Guerrilla War* and the real-life inspirations were removed, so it became two soldiers on a mission to overthrow some crackpot despot (although the map that popped up was clearly Cuba). *Guerrilla War* basically became the third *Ikari Warriors* game. Even some of the magazines supposed this, with *The One* wrapping up its 16-bit *Victory Road* review by saying: "Hopefully the forthcoming *Guerrilla War* – the third in the *Ikari* series – will be an improvement over this shoddy effort."

This apparently wasn't SNK's intention however, as the following year it released *Ikari III: The Rescue*. Prompted by the success of *Double Dragon* the firm had released its own arcade beat-'em-up *POW: Prisoners Of War*, and *Ikari III* was effectively a cross between that game and *Guerrilla War*. Ralf and Clark were back on Earth, back in camo pants and back amongst it as they battled to rescue a kidnapped child from the hands of terrorists. The trademark rotary controls returned but the pair now punched and kicked their way through the enemy throng. You could grab guns but ammo was severely limited; this was a brawler and no mistake. Another key difference was the overall size of the characters. Ralf and Clark were like goliaths compared to their original incarnations. Earlier games in the series all ran on SNK's standard triple-Z80



» [Arcade] It's great when you get a gun. It's just a shame that ammo is so limited.



» [NES] *Ikari Warriors III* was a step up from the first two games on the NES.

> **"Since the release of Ikari III Ralf and Clark have gone on to become SNK stalwarts"**

RETRO SHAMER: IKARI SPECIAL

The series suffered some shocking home conversions. Time to name and shame…



IKARI WARRIORS
C64

GUILTY PARTY: Quicksilver Software

■ The US version, of course. It runs far too fast, ends far too quickly and lacks co-op play. Anything else? The controls are poor, the music is downright morbid and there are glitches aplenty. It's not a complete bomb – it just looks so bad when compared to John Twiddy's excellent European version for Elite.



IKARI WARRIORS
ATARI 2600

GUILTY PARTY: Atari Corp

■ This one's a little unfair, because there was no way in hell the aging hardware could replicate the gameplay and visuals of the coin-op. It falls into the, 'Why Even Bother?' category. There's not even a single explosion – things just kind of vanish. At least the companion Atari 7800 release was a cracking conversion, excusing this slightly.



VICTORY ROAD
APPLE II

GUILTY PARTY: Quicksilver Software

■ The Apple version is well and truly rotten, being much worse than the original *Ikari Warriors* for the machine (and that wasn't much cop). Unbelievably the screen doesn't even scroll – it just flips forward a bit when you reach the top of the screen. Playing this game feels like wading through treacle with two broken legs.



VICTORY ROAD
AMIGA

GUILTY PARTY: Micro Wish

■ Something went terribly wrong here. The same team responsible for the quality 16-bit versions of the original game stumbled badly when it came to sequel. It looks okay but plays terribly. The Amiga and ST versions are essentially the same, but the Amiga game takes the biscuit as it cost a fiver more when it was released!



GUERRILLA WAR
SPECTRUM

GUILTY PARTY: Sentient Software

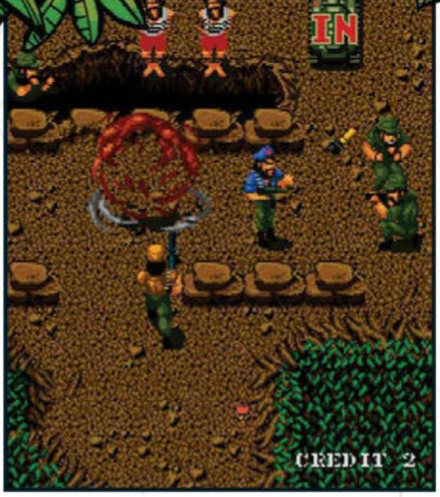
■ This release raises several questions. Why did the developer employ a block-scrolling routine and then decide to use hardly any colour? Why didn't Ocean quietly kill the game when it saw how bad it was? And perhaps most pertinently, why did *Your Sinclair* magazine award it 8/10, encouraging people to buy it?



IKARI III
C64

GUILTY PARTY: Quicksilver Software

■ Quicksilver makes it a hat-trick of shame with one of the worst coin-op conversions ever. The in-house QA team must have been off sick on the afternoon this was banged together and pushed out the door. The chunky graphics look more VIC-20 than C64, and that's unfair to the VIC. Basically, this conversion was borderline offensive.



» [Arcade] You're awarded extra points in *Guerrilla War* for showing compassion and saving the hostages.

setup and this was the first to use a 68000-based system.

Ikari III landed strong blows from the off, thanks to the impressive visuals and brutal gameplay, but the appeal of pummelling heads quickly wore off as the constant enemy spawning slowed your progress. It's telling that the game was at its best when you had a gun in your hand. Despite this it reviewed positively and *The Games Machine* magazine was in the minority when it raised concerns, saying: "It fails to inspire and SNK looks like it has pushed the *Ikari Warriors* theme way too far this time."

Perhaps tellingly there were three home versions of the game. The NES version was commendable, featuring much smaller sprites but more or less matching the gameplay of the original. It also included a fleshed-out backstory (told through animated scenes between 'acts') and a bonus underwater shooting stage. Quicksilver's PC and C64 versions for the US market were inferior, as you'd expect by now, and the C64 version in particular was an ugly, near-unplayable mess. "I contributed code and some management to *Ikari III* for the C64 where David Bean was the lead programmer," admits Lennard Feddersen. Was it another rush job, like *Victory Road*? "No, David had plenty of time," he reveals. "I didn't like *Ikari III*. It was a button-mashing brawler as far as I was concerned so I wasn't unhappy that David signed up to do the port."

Guerrilla War was also converted to home systems and the computer versions were awful with the Spectrum version being especially wretched. On the flipside the NES version was excellent thanks to its expansive stages and non-stop action. The game understood that it was more fun to shoot than be shot, and stood out as probably the finest *Ikari* home conversion.

Since the release of *Ikari III* Ralf and Clark have gone on to become SNK stalwarts, appearing as combatants in every core *King Of Fighters* title from the 1994 original onwards (see Ikari Cameos box out). The original *Ikari Warriors* has been ported to mobile phones twice, first by Elite in 2004 and then by SNK for the Japanese market in 2006. Perfect ports of all five arcade games appeared on the PSP compilation *SNK Arcade Classics 0* in 2011, alongside 15 other SNK titles. This collection was only released in Japan, but the games have since been released as PlayStation minis, allowing them to be played on PSP, PS3 and PS Vita.

As for the future of the *Ikari Warriors*: who knows? Sylvester Stallone recently announced that Rambo was hanging up his M60 for good. You can be sure that Ralf and Clark, SNK's sons of Rambo, won't be retiring from any time soon. *



» A cool illustration of Ralf and Clark, highlighting the cartoon style that SNK was aiming for.

» *Rambo* was an obvious inspiration for *Ikari Warriors*, which is only more evident when you see the artwork.

IKARI CAMEOS

The continuing adventures of Ralf and Clark

■ Although Ralf and Clark haven't starred in any of their own games for nearly 30 years that doesn't mean that the pair hasn't been busy. In 1994 Ralf and Clark made their first of many appearances in SNK's *The King Of Fighters* series. Aside from their desperation moves, the two characters had very little difference between them. Interestingly, the third fighter from the Ikari team, Heidern, played significantly different to them. The two began to gain their own distinct styles as the series progressed with Ralf being more of a striker and Clark specialising in grappling. Unsurprisingly, Ralf has been confirmed to star in *The King Of Fighters XIV*, alongside Heidern's adopted daughter, Leona. The game is due out later this year and is available exclusively on PS4, *The King Of fighters XIV* is looking like a solid addition to the series and will hopefully prove to be a satisfying alternative to *Street Fighter V*. Ralf and Clark also appear in the *Metal Slug* series, which makes a lot more sense when you consider their run-and-gun background. They made their debut in *Metal Slug 6* and play differently to each other. Ralf's ability to absorb a hit (effectively giving him six lives compared to the three of everyone else) makes him the best playable character, while Clark is more or a specialist character. Both heroes also appear in *Metal Slug 7*, with the same skillsets.







Special thanks to Steve at ArcadeArtwork.org for supplying the original arcade artwork and SNK Playmore for supplying the concept art.





RETROREVIVAL

Batman Returns

SO MUCH BETTER THAN THE MOVIE…

» KONAMI » SUPER NINTENDO » 1993

I don't really care for the Dark Knight. Yes he's been in two good films, off the top of my head, but I had no interest in comics growing up so he's never really been a big part of my life. On the other hand, I really, really love *Batman Returns*.

Although it's based on the Tim Burton film, it's very much its own game, having plenty of fun things in it that are loosely based on events in the movie. It's one of many, many different *Batman Returns* games that was released at the time and it's arguably my favourite (although I adore the driving sections found in the Mega-CD game).

Batman Returns is awesome because the Caped Crusader is just so badass in it. He menacingly stomps around, hitting bad guys with real force. You feel every punch, every kick and almost feel sorry for the poor heads that are getting caved in by the furious man in black. Almost…

While it's ostensibly a scrolling fighter, *Batman Returns* does have a little variety, alternating between side-on scrollers where you continually fling your batarang at incoming foes and delivering one highly enjoyable Batmobile jaunt on Level 5. For the most part, though, you'll be wading through an endless array of comical looking thugs and it's never a chore thanks to Batman's great range of moves, the stunning looking visuals and a superbly atmospheric score.

Batman Returns loses out a bit by being a single-player experience, and it's hard at times, but then so is the man himself. An excellent brawler that gets better with age. *

TURRICAN II

Take a home computer and some very talented German developers, mix together some arcade games with home computer sensibilities and what do you get? One of the defining games of the early Nineties. Nick Thorpe revisits this superb sequel…

Sticking with a machine through its declining years can be a trying experience. The realisation that software support is drying up is never easy to take, but if your platform of choice has lasted for a long time you might well see it pushed to extraordinary and previously unimaginable technical feats – and when it comes to the Commodore 64, few pushed harder than Manfred Trenz. He'd already tested the machine's capabilities with *Katakis* and *Turrican*, but he was looking to move on from the venerable 8-bit machine and reserved his best until last.

In *Turrican II*, you take control of the United Planets soldier Bren McGuire, who witnesses the slaughter of all of his crewmates aboard the Avalon 1 ship. The responsible party is an evil emperor known as The Machine, who personally surveys the carnage caused by his invaders. One small oversight – the not yet dead body of McGuire – opens up all the opportunity needed for his downfall, as the sole survivor takes up arms in an advanced Turrican combat suit and swears vengeance upon the murderous tyrant.

Like the original, *Turrican II* combines elements of the arcade run-and-gun genre with exploration-based gameplay that is far better suited to the home market. What this meant in practice was that while the game followed a linear level structure, progressing from one level to the next, the levels themselves were absolutely huge and offered plenty of scope for players to stray from the obvious and most efficient path. Dedicated players could find additional lives, power-ups, gems to build up their stock of continues, and even optional bosses if they took the time to explore each stage thoroughly. *Turrican II* also featured a mid-game shoot-'em-up interlude, providing a welcome respite from the labyrinthine platform stages.

It's fair to say that Manfred Trenz was never shy about paying homage to his influences – you can see elements of *Metroid* in the platform gameplay, obvious love is shown for *R-Type* and other shoot-'em-ups and *Alien* is heavily ▶



PIXEL PERFECT

These are the foes that stand between Bren McGuire and his revenge…





» [C64] Special effects, such as blowing wind, can be found throughout the game.



» [C64] These black balls spawn endlessly until you take out their source, so hop to it!



» [C64] Don't ever think it's safe to go in the water – these razor-toothed fish are hungry.

PICK-UP POWER

Bren McGuire can pick up a variety of items to make his quest for revenge a little less difficult…



MULTIPLE SHOT

■ This spread gun can shoot up to five bullets when powered-up, giving a nice arc and enabling you to take out enemies across a wide area.



LASER

■ It only fires in a straight line, but this weapon has superb penetrative capabilities and will get through lines of baddies without a problem.



BOUNCE

■ When a bounce shot hits a solid surface, two diagonal shots rebound off at 45 ° angles and can bounce through confined spaces for some time.



POWER LINE

■ The screen-clearing special weapon emits left and right from Bren McGuire, but can be interrupted if it encounters an obstacle.



POWER-UP

■ This item refills your energy bar completely, which can be a small boost or practically an extra life depending on your circumstances.



SURROUND

■ This extends the length of your whip, enabling you to cover more of the screen. This is very useful before tackling bosses!



SHIELD

■ Stars surround our hero, allowing him to go on a timed rampage by wandering into enemies without fear of any harm.



SMART BOMB

■ This one does what it says on the tin – upon collection, it immediately blows up every single enemy on the screen.



1-UP

■ The traditional extra life. These can be found in multiples, so be sure to hunt for them – you'll need every last one.



DIAMOND

■ Collect 100 of these and you'll earn a continue! That's trickier than it might sound, though, as there are only 599 in the game.

» [C64] You know how the debris breaks down in *Asteroids*? These spiked balls do exactly that.



▶ referenced in the visual design of later stages (we'll never get over being eaten by the scenery for the first time). However, the game was crafted so carefully that each element felt like part of a coherent whole, rather than a collection of pop culture references. What's more, Manfred Trenz's most notable skill was in making the seemingly impossible become a reality on a Commodore 64.

If you can think of a crazy dream feature on the C64, the man sometimes known as 'The Master' was able to pull it off. Smooth multi-directional scrolling was no problem. Parallax scrolling was used liberally and to great effect, and some of those backgrounds were even animated. If you wanted to see enormous boss sprites or a multitude of smaller enemies, the engine could handle both tasks admirably. While *Turrican II* definitely played like a home computer game, its technical mastery and strong graphical work meant that it presented itself with the finesse of an arcade game.

The result of all this was an incredibly positive critical response. In *Commodore Format*, the game was described as "proof positive that you *can* teach an old 64 new tricks" in a 96% review that heavily praised the large levels and visual excellence of the game. *Zzap!* was similarly effusive in its own 96% review, stating that the game's overall high level of quality was "just like the very best of coin-ops but free from the constraints of a conversion". However, the game was a bittersweet classic for C64 owners. In a sign of the times, those who made it to the end of this massive and challenging adventure got to read a message from Manfred Trenz himself stating that *Turrican II* would be his final game for the home computer. It wasn't, thanks to the C64 shoot-'em-up *Enforcer*, but it was the end of the line for the *Turrican* series on the beige box.

Despite the fact that Manfred Trenz had designed and coded *Turrican II* on a C64, the Amiga ▶



» [C64] Well, this is an awkward tunnel full of missiles. Is there another route?

CONVERSION CAPERS

Most conversions of Turrican II were well-received by the gaming press, but which ones are best to play today?



ZX SPECTRUM 1991

■ While it was well-received by the press, we'd rate this as one of the least enjoyable versions of *Turrican II*. The visuals pack in plenty of colour, which is nice to see, but the movement is stiff and the scrolling is jerky.



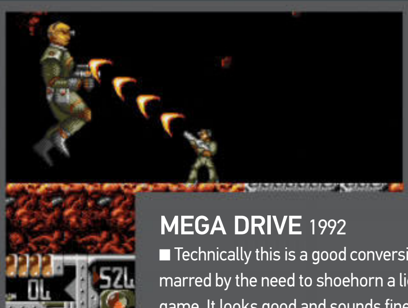
GAME BOY 1992

■ It's like the Mega Drive game, but in monochrome and with fewer sprites. This means no shoot-'em-up stages and poor *Universal Soldier*-themed replacements. It's not bad, but you'll want to play it on one of the later models to mitigate motion blur.

ATARI ST 1991

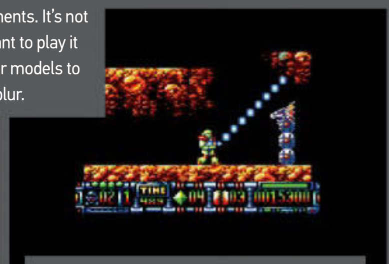
■ With fewer colours, a smaller viewing area and poorer sound, the ST version of *Turrican II* is less impressive than the Amiga version. That's not to say that it's bad – it still ranks very well as an Atari ST game.





MEGA DRIVE 1992

■ Technically this is a good conversion, but it's marred by the need to shoehorn a licence into the game. It looks good and sounds fine, but the loss of the shoot-'em-up levels is a downer and the replacement platform levels are quite weak.



AMSTRAD CPC 1991

■ It doesn't move as smoothly as the C64 game, but the Amstrad version is built to the machine's strengths and features the chunky, colourful visuals the machine is remembered for.

AMIGA 1991

■ Amusingly, Rainbow Arts' conversion of *Turrican II* was finished before the original. It's an excellent rendition of the game with detailed visuals and some altered gameplay elements, such as the design of the first boss and the final level.





CDTV 1991

■ This is the same game as the Amiga version, with no extras at all – a shame, given how good a CD soundtrack could be. Despite this, it's a much sought-after item and has become expensive as a result.



PC 1995

■ This DOS version appeared much later than the other versions of the game, and features the best presentation as a result – the Amiga music has been reused and the graphics have been completely redrawn. It's pretty easy to get hold of still, as it was given away as a cover CD on various magazines.

▶ version was actually the first to market as Rainbow Arts had pulled ahead with the conversion. This means that the 16-bit versions have minor differences from the original, in particular omitting the jet pack action of the final stage on C64. However the biggest difference is the inclusion of music, which had been ultimately impossible to achieve on the Commodore 64, despite Manfred's desire to add it. The Amiga version's soundtrack was composed by the noted musician Chris Huelsbeck, and remains one of his most recognised works. In a 94% review for *Computer & Video Games*, Paul Glancey wrote that "arcade junkies need look no further for the ultimate Amiga shoot-'em-up experience". Conversions to the other home computer formats followed later in 1991, and received an equally enthusiastic response.

When the time came for console conversions, *Turrican II* suffered something of an indignity. The game's publisher, Accolade, had acquired the licence to *Universal Soldier*, a popular action film that pitted Jean-Claude Van Damme against Dolph Lundgren. At the same time, the company had a complete port of *Turrican II* ready to go. It was decided that the movie licence would improve the game's chances in the marketplace, and producer Christopher Bankston was the one tasked with overseeing alterations to fit the theme. The most notable change is that the shoot-'em-up stages have been replaced with three new platform stages, designed to give the game a closer link to the film. Likewise, enemies and bosses were redesigned, but the retention of their original sizes meant that poor Luc Deveraux found himself fighting mini tanks and a Sergeant Scott standing an inhuman 30 feet tall.



» [C64] The first shoot-'em-up stage is a standard horizontally-scrolling affair.

Universal Soldier received a less positive critical reception than *Turrican II* when it arrived at the end of 1992, but while *Turrican* fans were disgruntled with the changes, reviewers felt it didn't go far enough. Paul Davies noted the original game's age and felt that *Universal Soldier* "tries to fob us off with the same dated gameplay," in a 47% review for *Mean Machines Sega*. *Mega*'s Andy Dyer was comparatively kinder, criticising the lack of connection to the film but stating that "*Turrican II* buffs will find that this is as good a version as any" in a 68% review. A Game Boy version was also released, but a completed SNES version never made it to market.

Despite the fact that the series continued for a few years with the likes of *Turrican III* and the *Super Turrican* series, *Turrican II* is regarded as the high point of the series. Fans heavily praise its huge, open-ended stages, which were abandoned once the series began to shift towards the console market in favour of more linear, straightforward stages that veered closer to the arcade style of design. Fans still yearn for a return to the good old days of *Turrican II*, and you can see that in the various unofficial clones that have been released over the years, as well as two attempts to create a 'true' *Turrican III* on the C64. It's not hard to see why that is, either – *Turrican II* made a huge impact back in 1991 and 25 years later, it remains one of the most iconic games of its generation. ✱



» [C64] Don't get burnt by this stationary enemy, it hurts pretty badly.



» [C64] Watch out – in later levels, even the scenery is capable of eating you alive!

BOSS RUSH

Turrican's bosses were a memorable bunch, and the sequel upped the ante with even more malevolent machinery!



GIANT ROBOT

■ This massive enemy appears part-way through the game's first stage, and will jump from left to right and fire a big laser at you. In some versions, his jumping causes debris to fall from the ceiling. Stay in the centre of the screen and aim your lightning whip at its head to see it off.



HEAD HONCHO

■ You'll want to stay towards the left of the screen here, as this boss fires a rebounding beam into the ground at the middle of the stage. It also likes to emit little robots from its gaping maw. Fire at the flashing weak spot on its forehead until it's very dead.

THE OCULUS

■ This cycloptic turret bobs up and down in the middle of the screen, shooting missiles at whichever side you're standing. The trick here is to jump on top of it when it's firing, then hop off and fire at the eye! After it has taken sufficient damage, it'll start flying around the screen.





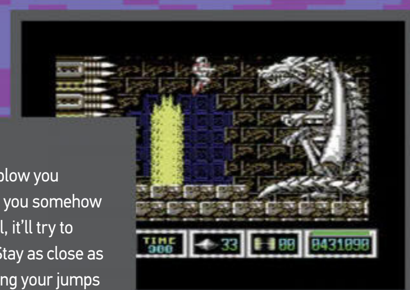
ENORMOUS GUNSHIP

■ This nasty piece of work has loads of guns and, if you get too close, it'll grab you and drag you off into the nether. Stay a safe distance away (there's a little recess which shows you where to stand) and shoot its guns when the opportunity arises.



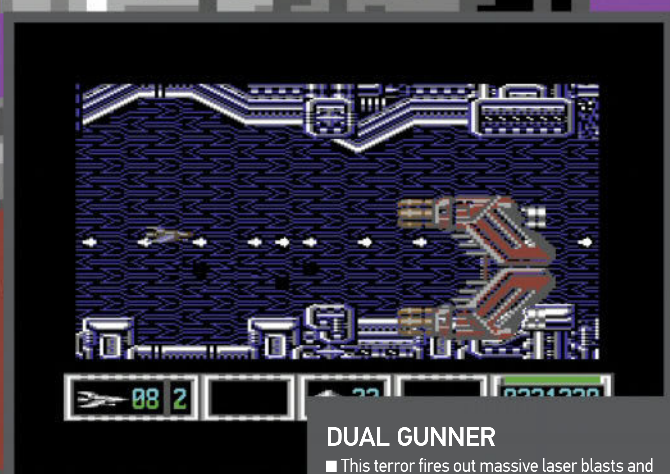
EYE POD

■ This wall-mounted eyeball will spit more eyeballs at your ship, which bounce around in all directions. Luckily they can be shot, so take them out as needed and fire on the main eyeball whenever you can.



STEEL DRAGON

■ This nasty piece of work will blow you backwards with its wings and if you somehow manage to avoid the spiked wall, it'll try to incinerate you with fire blasts. Stay as close as you can and shoot its head, timing your jumps well to avoid the fire.



DUAL GUNNER

■ This terror fires out massive laser blasts and smaller rapid-fire ones while moving up and down. After you've destroyed the first set of guns it'll shed its armour and become much more aggressive, moving faster and attempting to ram your ship.



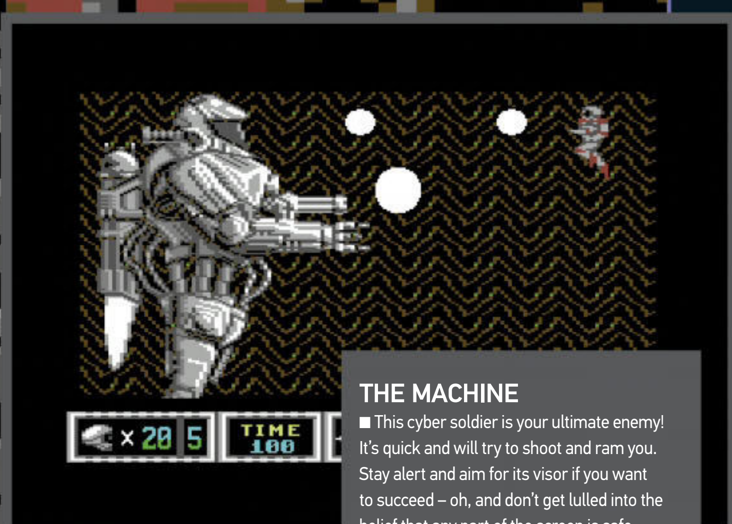
MEGA WALKER ASSAULT

■ These walkers are relentless, and jumping on them isn't going to stop them this time! You'll need to push through an unlimited number of them until you reach the end of the stage, so pound the fire button and use your power lines if you have to.



THE CRUSHER

■ This menacing orb floats around the screen, occasionally letting you peek at its core. Once you've shot that to pieces it'll split in two and try squashing you! Destroy one half of it first, and the other becomes much easier to handle.



THE MACHINE

■ This cyber soldier is your ultimate enemy! It's quick and will try to shoot and ram you. Stay alert and aim for its visor if you want to succeed – oh, and don't get lulled into the belief that any part of the screen is safe....

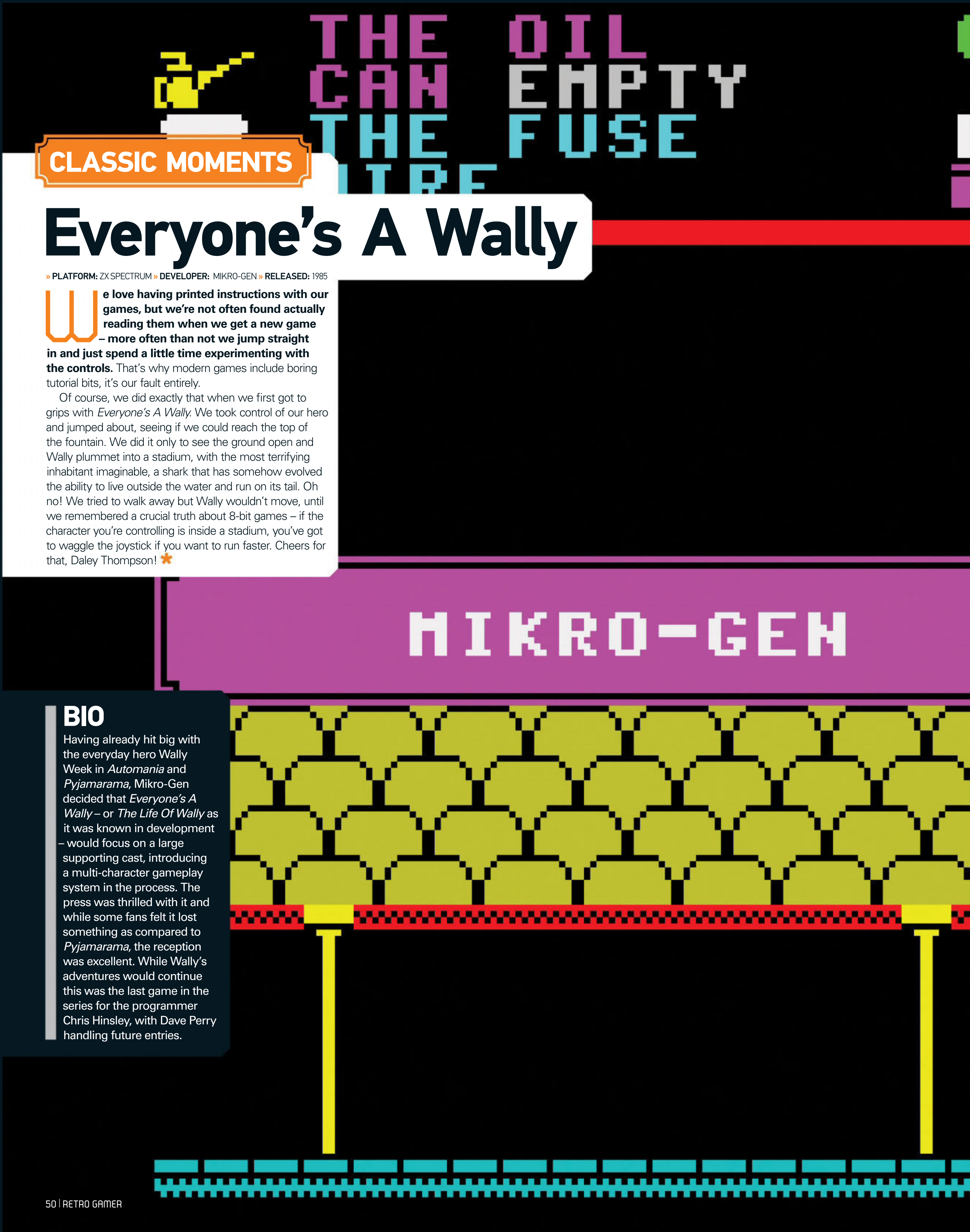
CLASSIC MOMENTS

Everyone's A Wally

» **PLATFORM:** ZX SPECTRUM » **DEVELOPER:** MIKRO-GEN » **RELEASED:** 1985

We love having printed instructions with our games, but we're not often found actually reading them when we get a new game – more often than not we jump straight in and just spend a little time experimenting with the controls. That's why modern games include boring tutorial bits, it's our fault entirely.

Of course, we did exactly that when we first got to grips with *Everyone's A Wally*. We took control of our hero and jumped about, seeing if we could reach the top of the fountain. We did it only to see the ground open and Wally plummet into a stadium, with the most terrifying inhabitant imaginable, a shark that has somehow evolved the ability to live outside the water and run on its tail. Oh no! We tried to walk away but Wally wouldn't move, until we remembered a crucial truth about 8-bit games – if the character you're controlling is inside a stadium, you've got to waggle the joystick if you want to run faster. Cheers for that, Daley Thompson! *



BIO

Having already hit big with the everyday hero Wally Week in *Automania* and *Pyjamarama*, Mikro-Gen decided that *Everyone's A Wally* – or *The Life Of Wally* as it was known in development – would focus on a large supporting cast, introducing a multi-character gameplay system in the process. The press was thrilled with it and while some fans felt it lost something as compared to *Pyjamarama*, the reception was excellent. While Wally's adventures would continue this was the last game in the series for the programmer Chris Hinsley, with Dave Perry handling future entries.



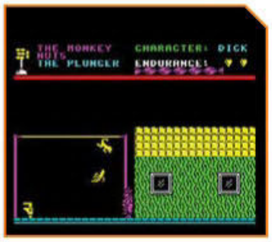
MORE CLASSIC EVERYONE'S A WALLY MOMENTS

Cast Party



The big innovation in *Everyone's A Wally* was the ability to switch between five different characters: Wally's wife, Wilma, Tom the mechanic, Dick the plumber, Harry the electrician and, of course, Wally Week himself. Each roamed the world independently when not under player control, and could move items around too – sometimes hindering your effort to find them!

Monkeying Around



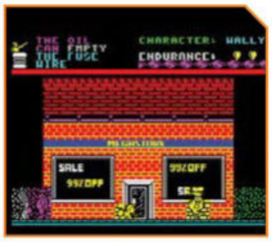
Solving puzzles in *Everyone's A Wally* usually requires replacing certain items with an acceptable alternative, and when you're confronted with a monkey guarding a wrench, you tend to imagine it might be a banana or something like that. Not on your life. It's a *monkey* wrench and you obviously need *monkey* nuts to claim it. Do you get it?

This Seems Familiar



Harry has got to fix the electricity supply, and there's only one way to do it – with a parody of an arcade game! After *Pyjamarama*'s *Space Invaders* section, the next logical step was to do a rip-off version of another Atari classic – in this case it was *Asteroids*. Here, you blast away at little lightning bolts instead of gigantic chunks of floating space debris.

A Right Little…

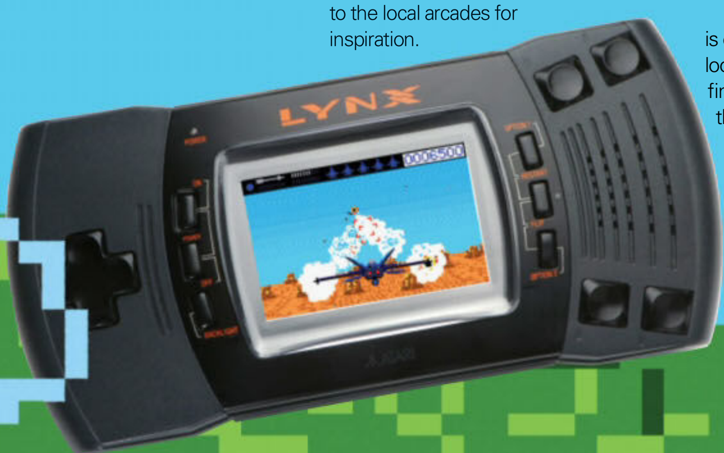


We're pretty sure that most parents come to fear their offspring in one way or another, but Wally's sprog, Herbert, is dangerous at a frighteningly young age. He crawls around the map at random getting under the feet of the main cast, and damaging them when they collide with him. Nap time can't come quick enough for this bad-natured baby.

BLUE LIGHTNING

1989 saw the debut of the world's very first colour handheld, but the console really needed a game to show off what the Lynx was capable of. Kieren Hawken discovers how Epyx's Blue Lightning did just that…

In the summer of 1987 Sega Enterprises unleashed the first game to use the upgraded version of the famous Super Scaler hardware, *After Burner*. It set the arcades alight, enabling audiences everywhere to take control of a F-14 Tomcat fighter jet and pretend they were Maverick in *Top Gun*. Home versions started to appear throughout 1988, although none of them were quite able to capture the magic of the arcade game, mainly because of deficiencies in the hardware. Over in California, software developers Epyx and the team behind the Commodore Amiga were trying to put the finishing touches to the Handy, a 16-bit colour handheld that would become the Atari Lynx. As we all know, every system needs games so the team decided to make a few visits to the local arcades for inspiration.



One of the key people in this team was graphics artist Arthur 'Art' Koch. He had been commissioned with programmer Stephen Landrum to design and produce a 3D flying/combat game and remembers those little jaunts fondly. "RJ (Mical) would take us all to the mini kart track to play arcade games, *After Burner* being one of them," he recalls. "That's probably where I got the notion, when I was asked to make art for a flying game, that it would be the plane in third-person, rather than a cockpit view. I think Stephen was influenced by a first-person cockpit view game like the computer game *Falcon*. Playing arcade games was much like studying art history in art school. *Falcon* was a hardcore flight simulator that was hard to play so I wanted to go more in the arcade action style of gameplay and graphics."

The inspiration of Sega's *After Burner* is clear for all to see when you take one look at *Blue Lightning*, but we wanted to find out a little bit more about just how the development of the game came about. "I had been paired up with Stephen to make a flying/shooting game," recalls Art. "His idea was a first-person shooter from the cockpit of an airplane, but nobody told me this until after I created all the views to animate a third-person F-16. Steve scaled it all down so it would fit in memory and ran with it as third-person shooter. I modelled the plane in 3D and rendered all the frames of animation to draw over, so I was kind of attached to using that art. Thankfully Steve was one of the few engineers I worked with that would meet an artist halfway. He really strained his brain to figure out how everything should rotate, scroll and scale in the third-person rather than first-person, as he originally had in mind. I like to paint landscapes and sit in the window seat of an airplane when I travel so it was exciting to try and recreate that in a game." With the design of the game finalised Epyx needed to come up with a name and Chuck Sommerville was one of key people involved the Handy



» [Lynx] *Blue Lightning* features some really impressive explosions.



» [Lynx] Throughout each level the game will give you updates on how the current mission is going.



» [Lynx] A handy password feature lets you skip earlier levels. This one recreates the *After Burner* canyon run.



» [Lynx] *Blue Lightning* featured great technology and lots of explosions. What's not to love?



BLUE LIGHTNING 101

■ This superb launch game effectively played like Sega's *After Burner*, but in the palm of your hand. It features intense dogfights, but also gives you a fair amount of missions to take part in too. It's a solid little shooter that really highlighted the Lynx's hardware strengths.

project. "I still remember the meetings we had when we were developing the game at Epyx, in fact it was me who came up with the name! I remember handing a piece of paper to RJ Mical with *Blue Lightning* written on it, he loved it and said, 'That's it! We have a name!'" No doubt Chuck was inspired by the film and TV series *Blue Thunder*, which saw a high-tech helicopter flying into various combat zones, much like the game.

Working on new hardware is sure to be exciting so we had to ask Art what it was like working with the Lynx in those early times, Art remembers the day he was first introduced to the system. "I started working at Epyx in 1988, mainly doing PC and Amiga games, while RJ Mical and Dave Needle were developing the Handy and they needed games [produced] for it," he says. "They wanted new games as well as versions of popular existing games I had already worked on, so I got the nod.

> **"His was a first-person shooter from the cockpit of an airplane, but nobody told me this until after I created all the views to animate a third person F-16!"**
> Art Koch

Not only that, I was also lucky enough to be chosen to work on the game they wanted to bundle with the hardware to show off its capabilities!" That game was actually *California Games*, but *Blue Lightning* would be the title that would really show what the Lynx was capable of. *After Burner* was well known for its jaw-dropping scaling techniques and this would become one of the key features of the new machine. Scaling had never been seen on a home system before ▶

IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** Atari
- » **DEVELOPER:** Epyx
- » **RELEASED:** 1989
- » **GENRE:** Shoot-'em-up
- » **PLATFORM:** Atari Lynx

» This early mock-up of the game shows quite a different look to the final product.





DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

ZARLOR MERCENARY (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: Atari Lynx
YEAR: 1990

CHIP'S CHALLENGE
SYSTEM: Various
YEAR: 1989

ESCAPE FROM MONSTER MANOR
SYSTEM: 3DO
YEAR: 1993

▶ so for the designers to cram this technology into a handheld was simply unheard of at the time. Art remembers the thrill of working with this technology. "For an artist it was exciting to have hardware scaling and four times as many colours as a PC at that time," he says. "We wanted to beat the slime-green palette of the Game Boy so bad! Just one artist and an engineer with not much input from the producers made for a lot of freedom to make a game we wanted using the technology available." Chuck also recalls the custom hardware coming in useful, "One of my favourite memories was doing the intro sequence for the game. I had written an animation engine that had high-speed scaling and rotation built into it that made stuff like that so easy. We also used it for the intro on *Electrocop*, *Slime World*, *Gauntlet 3* and several other titles too."

> **"When we coded it we really violated a rule the system designers insisted on, but we did it in a really beautiful way"**
> Chuck Sommerville

Even with this revolutionary new hardware the project was still not plain sailing because the Lynx, like any other system, still had its limitations and these were causing a few headaches for Art. "Creating a natural environment, a realistic plane and using text in such low resolution with a limited palette was a challenge," he remembers. "Imagining how the background tiles with sprites for trees, mountains, and objects could be combined in different ways and transition from one environment to another was difficult to visualise until the programmer got the art in the game and displayed it on the hardware. It was challenging to think in 2.5D and make it work." Programmer Chuck was never one to dwell on limitations too long and set about working with Stephen to overcome them. "The most amazing thing about *Blue Lightning,* for me, especially with it being in the opening line-up of games for the Lynx, was that when we coded it we really violated a rule the system designers insisted on, but we did it in a really beautiful way. Dave Needle and RJ Mical had always said that once the game was up and running we shouldn't be accessing the ROM again in any sort of way, and *Blue Lightning* violated that. We created a demo where the LED on the Lynx would flash every time we were accessing the game card, I started playing it and as I flew the plane around the light would flash as it streamed data for the landscapes and sprites directly from ROM. I later used this technique again on *Zarlor Mercenary* but in an even more intensive way, to prove it could be taken even further. I said to Art, 'We don't need these graphics and images until later, so



» The gold *Blue Lighting Demo Card* is an unplayable rolling demo of the game created for retail stores in order to show off the advanced Lynx hardware.

CLAWS OUT The Games That Launched the Lynx in 1989



ELECTROCOP

■ Originally titled *Impossible Mission 3*, Epyx chose to rename the game after it started to differ too much from the platform-based gameplay of the previous titles. This technically impressive game was a blend of genres with puzzles, shooting and exploration all making up different parts of the gameplay.



CALIFORNIA GAMES

■This game was chosen as the original pack-in for the Lynx and was already very well known to gamers everywhere, having previously appeared on a multitude of other platforms. While it doesn't feature all the events of earlier versions, it's still worth owning due to its neat scaling effects and incredibly fun four-player Comlynx mode.



GATES OF ZENDOCON

■ Another visually stunning game, *Gates Of Zendocon* was an original project by Peter Engelbrite to try and cash in on other popular horizontal shooters of the day, such as *Gradius* and *R-Type*. Despite having over 50 levels and a wide range of enemies to blast through, the meagre power-ups and repetition will start to grate on you.



CHIP'S CHALLENGE

■ The last game to arrive (it just missed the US launch but managed to make the European debut), *Chip's Challenge* is probably one of the Lynx's most famous games. Chuck Sommerville's strategy puzzle game was so highly regarded that it went on to be converted to almost every platform under the sun, It was even re-released on Steam in 2015.



just store them away and we can load them when we need them.' He was really impressed. We actually wanted to take the 3D effects of *Blue Lightning* further and make a polygon-style tank game in the vein of *Battlezone*. I started to code it and had a demo version of the game to show Atari, but I couldn't get it running the way I wanted so I decided to can it. This is actually how I came up with *Chip's Challenge,* as I had just a couple of weeks left to present something to Atari and quickly came up with that."

The finished product was released to critical and commercial acclaim, the press of the time loved it, with *ST Format* awarding the game 94%, *The Games Machine* and *ST Action* gave it 87% and Italian magazine *Player One* opted for 95%. As well as the stunning graphics, *Blue Lightning* also received special praise for adding new elements to the tried-and-tested 'shoot-everything-out-of-the-sky' formula of *After Burner.* Epyx's take on the genre added new mission types that involved taking out specified ground targets, negotiating mountain ranges and even acting as a courier to deliver important documents. The designers also kept in all the things that arcade audiences loved in Sega's game, such as the barrel rolls, lock-on targeting system and the ability to turn on the afterburners for high-speed thrills. But was there anything they wanted to include that they couldn't? Art had some much grander ambitions for the game, as he elaborates: "There were loads of extra ground tiles, mountain, object and tree sprites that didn't repeat well so because of limited memory. So each level had to be cut down to just what would tile well without looking repetitive. I created an image with the extra art and created a world much larger than could be displayed on the Lynx. Ten years later when I created the environment for *Soviet Strike,* I no longer had to repeat tiles and I was free to create a big terrain texture based on some aerial photos that I took which looked much more naturalistic." To conclude the story of *Blue Lightning* we asked Art if he's pleased that the game is still so highly regarded. "Of course," he exclaims. "I wasn't really aware many people still knew about it until recently. It was a game where I had a lot of artistic licence and got to work on every aspect of the game as I was the sole artist. I worked on many games where I wasn't so limited technically but didn't have as much creative input into the design. ✱



» [Atari Lynx] The last mission on the game also features allied buildings and vehicles that you have to be careful not to destroy.

Special thanks to Chuck Sommerville, Arthur Koch, Fred Gill and Kristi Louise Herd.

» [Atari Lynx] Later levels charge you to avoid enemy missiles, which requires a lot of manoeuvring.



» [Atari Lynx] As well as land and air-based targets, some missions also feature seafaring foes.



» [Atari Lynx] It's all too easy to fly into the environment, so watch what you're doing at all times.

DOES LIGHTNING STRIKE TWICE?

Not in the case of Attention To Detail's ill-fated sequel it doesn't…

When Atari was busy developing its new 64-bit Jaguar console it looked back through the company's vast back catalogue to find titles that it thought would make a big splash on the new hardware. One of the several Lynx games that stood out, along with *Checkered Flag* and *Gates Of Zendocon* (*Crescent Galaxy* was intended to be the sequel), was, of course, *Blue Lightning.* Atari chose to release a sequel to the game on the Jaguar CD add-on, hoping that it would also wow audiences the way the first game did and make the Jaguar CD a must-have item for gamers. Unfortunately it didn't turn out as planned and the Jaguar CD version of *Blue Lightning* pretty much did the opposite of what was intended, leading consumers to question just what Atari was thinking using such a game to promote its new hardware.

The development team behind it was Attention To Detail, which had previously programmed the award-winning *CyberMorph*. We asked ATD co-owner Fred Gill just what went wrong. "ATD had grown and we hadn't managed that growth well, and we hadn't managed the team that produced it very well either," he says. "We completely underestimated how much work *Blue Lightning* was going to be, and I don't think we fully understood the gameplay when we started recreating it for the Jaguar. I remember squeezing the graphics in was painful, with weird shapes and lots of space being wasted. We just couldn't get the performance we wanted, and I am pretty sure the CD drive was a late addition to the project too, which only compounded our development problems even more. Kristi Louise Herd was the one of the team responsible for the game and has bad memories of the project. "It was absolutely awful," she says. "*Blue Lightning* has to be the game which gave me the most headaches in my career. ATD had an idea that we would scan all the backgrounds in and produce 3D models for the sprites, it was such a naff idea. It just didn't work and it caused me a lot of heartache as I was so unhappy not only with the game but with the company. The models looked great, but the scanned backgrounds looked awful. In the end, we had a mixture of drawn and scanned backgrounds. Needless to say, it got slated and I left the company not long after."







Hardware Heaven

Vectrex

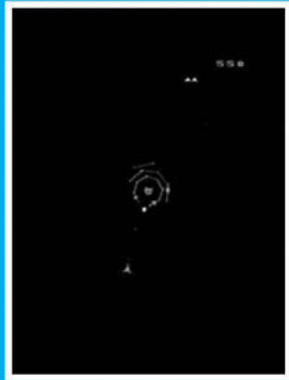
» **MANUFACTURER:** General Consumer Electronics » **YEAR:** November 1982
» **COST:** $199 (US launch), £129.95 (UK launch), £100+ (today)

When Smith Engineering embarked on a project codenamed Mini Arcade, nobody at the company would have known that they were creating a games machine that would remain unique for decades to come. Originally conceived as a handheld console utilising an integrated vector graphics display, the Vectrex evolved into a tabletop console with a larger display and was licensed to General Consumer Electronics. Strong initial sales in 1982's holiday season convinced Milton Bradley to buy out GCE, but the system would soon fall victim to the videogame market crash and cost the company millions of dollars. The Vectrex was ultimately discontinued in 1984, less than two years after it launched.

Despite its commercial failure, the Vectrex is a prized piece of hardware today – as the only home console to use a vector display, the Vectrex has a graphical style unlike any other. The bright, sharp lines and smooth object zooming are evocative of the golden age of arcade gaming, with conversions of games like *Armor Attack* supporting the nostalgia trip. Additionally, the Vectrex has attracted a lively homebrew community which has gone some way to making up for the machine's short commercial life with high-quality games such as *Protector*, *Thrust* and *Star Sling*.



ESSENTIAL GAME



Star Castle

A variety of Cinematronics' arcade games were converted to the Vectrex during the machine's commercial lifetime, and *Star Castle* is amongst the best of them. Your goal is to shoot through a series of concentric rings of armour, in order to destroy the central cannon – but you've got to be careful not to fully destroy rings, as they will regenerate upon destruction. As the original arcade game used a vector display, the Vectrex is the perfect console for a conversion. Of course it's also the only console with a *Star Castle* conversion, making this even more essential to own.

Vectrex fact

■ Despite including an analogue joystick, most Vectrex games use eight standard directions. As a result, modded Mega Drive pads are popular replacement Vectrex controllers.



RAM: 1KB

PROCESSOR: Motorola 68A09 (1.5MHz)

AUDIO: AY-3-8192 sound chip (3 channel)

OPERATING SYSTEM: 8KB Vectrex BIOS ROM

MEDIA: ROM cartridge (32KB)

Minority Report

INTERESTING GAMES YOU'VE NEVER PLAYED



GAME BOY COLOR

Though the Game Boy Color has something of a deserved reputation of being the home of many terrible games based on even worse movies, there's still plenty of lesser-known oddities hidden in its library, and Jonny Dimaline is here to reveal them



» [Game Boy Color] Question mark boxes can contain all manner of useful items, from block-breaking drills to ridable clouds.

SAMURAI KID

■ DEVELOPER: BIOX ■ YEAR: 2001

■ Though it's been somewhat oversubscribed in recent times by indie developers, the puzzle-platformer was once a much rarer beast. Puzzle-platformers that combined clever brain teasers, great-looking graphics, and a decently speedy pace even more so. *Samurai Kid* is one such example. It has the eponymous Samurai Kid traversing platformy stages made up of interconnecting rooms, each with its own puzzles, most of which involve turning enemies to blocks and using them to hit switches or provide the means to jump up high walls.

You're equipped with three tools to aid in this endeavour: a gourd, which turns struck enemies into blocks, and conversely sends said blocks reeling ahead in a straight line; a sword, which smashes enemies and blocks alike; and a harisen (or paper fan), which annoys stuck enemies and goads them into chasing the player.

The real magic of the game (and the most important part of any puzzle-platformer) is how well the stages are designed with the player's tools in mind. The first stage does a fine job of acquainting the player with their tools, and each subsequent stage adds new types of enemies, switches and obstacles. The room-based structure of the stages also allows the learning curve to take place for each new addition in a separate macrocosm: new elements are introduced, and soon after are combined with the old ones and placed in gradually more complex situations. It sounds like simple, good game design, but it's rare to play a game where all the pieces are put in place together so expertly.

The graphics put another feather in *Samurai Kid*'s cap. With detailed backgrounds and sprites, great-looking colour palettes and animation that's both smooth and full of charm, they've got pretty much everything you'd want in an attractive two-dimensional game on an 8-bit system. The animation is especially great, filling the protagonist and enemies alike with character. Some of the enemies look so pathetically cute that it's almost a shame to turn them into blocks and shove them around, and Samurai kid himself



» [Game Boy Color] The boss fights are pure action, offering a break from the slightly more cerebral tasks that make up the stages themselves.

IN DEPTH



HAVE A HEART
■ Like in the *Legend Of Zelda* games, there are pieces of heart hidden around the stages in *Samurai Kid*, and collecting four of them will increase your maximum health.

FULL OF LIFE
■ The main character's sprite is full of detail and personality, helped a great deal by the care and attention that went into his animation. Even his hair and cape are fully animated!

GIVE PEACE A CHANCE
■ Not every enemy is meant to be defeated: this guy comes in handy for pushing around blocks when you can't get to the switches yourself.

RIGHT TOOLS FOR THE JOB
■ Samurai Kid's got all the tools, each with their own uses, and all are vital to solving puzzles, finding secrets and beating the bosses.

not only has all the animations you'd expect for running, jumping and attacking but he has a separate and lengthy idle animation for each different weapon.

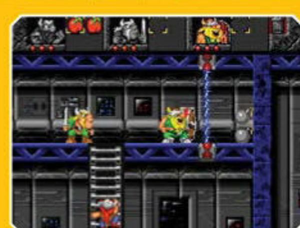
We're glad to say that *Samurai Kids* isn't just a one-trick pony. Each stage ends with a boss fight, and the game's control is good enough that these encounters can be battles to rival any action platformer and there's no feel of clunkiness that you might expect when transferring the toolset of a game in one genre to one of a different, but related subgenre. *Samurai Kid* is a great game, that would make a worthy addition to anyone's GBC library, and it's criminal that it never saw a western release despite being relatively text-free.

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



KLONOA: DOOR TO PHANTOMILE
PLAYSTATION

■ Not only is Klonoa's first game a platformer that blends puzzles and action, like *Samurai Kid*, but also like *Samurai Kid*, it features an array of adorable enemies that the player has to abuse, destroy and turn into inanimate blocks to progress through stages.



THE LOST VIKINGS
SNES

■ Again, Blizzard's nordic classic is a platform game that has combines puzzles and action, though this time with a much heavier emphasis on the puzzles, which get sadistically difficult pretty quickly. It's also got a great line in silly humour, which carries over into its sequel, which is basically more of the same.



DAIKU NO GEN-SAN - KACHIKACHI NO TONKACHI GA KACHI
GAME BOY

■ This is by the same developers as *Samurai Kid*, and can be considered its spiritual predecessor. It plays a lot simpler, and the uses of the different kinds of hammer aren't as intuitive as the three different samurai weapons.

Minority Report

LIL' MONSTER

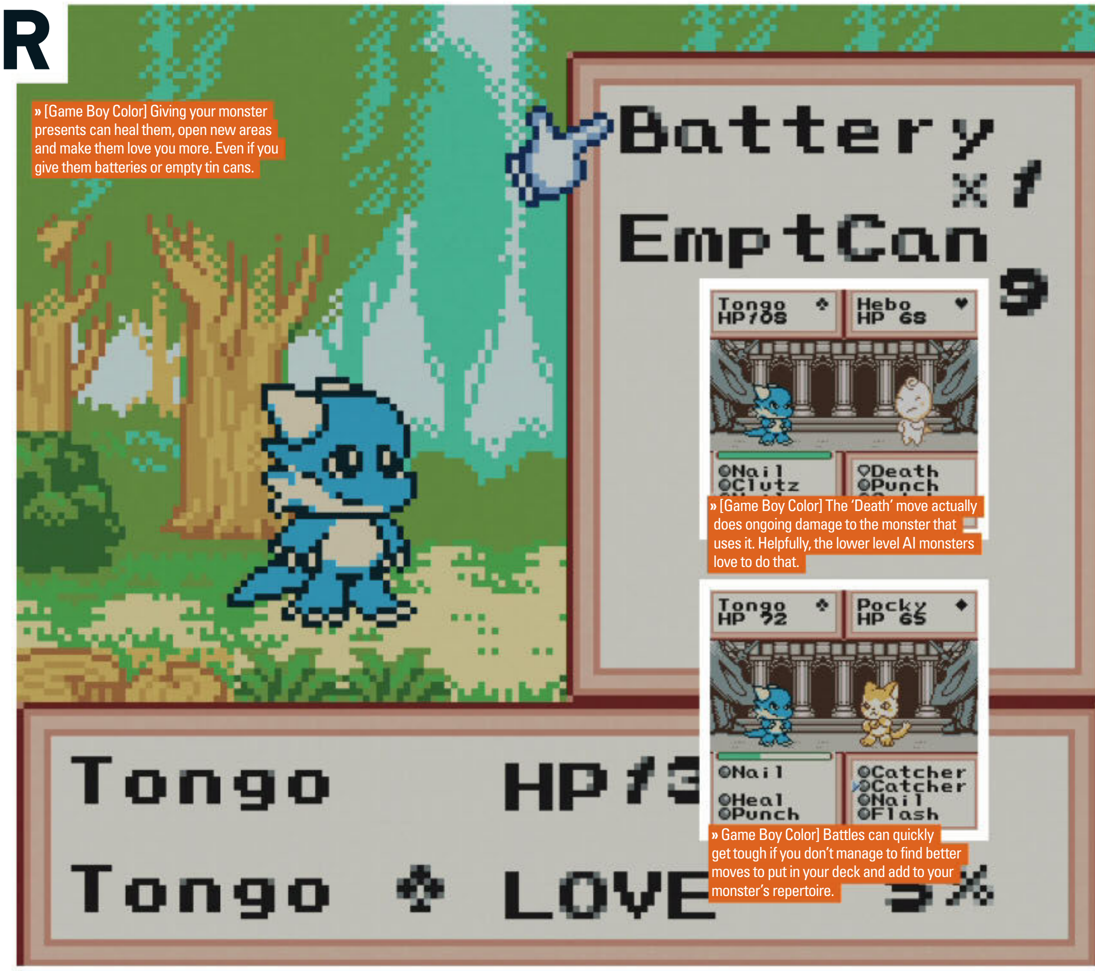
■ DEVELOPER: KID ■ YEAR: 1999

■ It could be said that the very existence of the Game Boy Color is thanks to the popularity of the *Pokémon* series breathing new life into the original Game Boy, so it's not too surprising that there are a great many clones, knock-offs and wannabes trying to cash in on Nintendo's monolithic pet-fighting saga.

As *Pokémon* clones go, *Lil' Monster* isn't particularly better or worse than most of the others, though it does have some unique twists. The first is that it almost entirely removes the RPG adventuring aspect of the genre, and focuses entirely on combat and raising your monster (just the one, another contrast compared to the parties of battling beasts these games usually have you lug around with you).

There's also the fact that the kind of monster you have seems to be mostly cosmetic, and statistics other than HP seem to be absent. Instead, your part in making a stronger monster lies in building a kind of deck up of special moves. The moves come in the form of gems, and the only obvious way of getting gems is by defeating enemy monsters who then turn into gems. Unfortunately, the only way to defeat stronger monsters to get their gems, and the more powerful gems they yield is lots of tedious and painstaking grinding to level up and raise your maximum HP in the hopes that you can last out a prolonged war of attrition with a stronger opponent.

Despite all the bad qualities *Lil' Monster* has, it's still strangely compulsive. For a while, at least, you'll want to struggle through the tedium to see what else the game offers. Unfortunately, you'll probably get bored before anything interesting does happen.

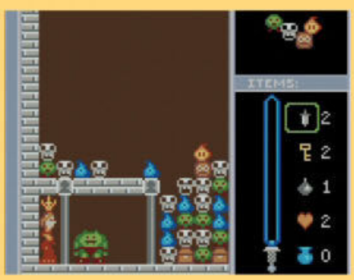


» [Game Boy Color] Giving your monster presents can heal them, open new areas and make them love you more. Even if you give them batteries or empty tin cans.

» [Game Boy Color] The 'Death' move actually does ongoing damage to the monster that uses it. Helpfully, the lower level AI monsters love to do that.

» Game Boy Color] Battles can quickly get tough if you don't manage to find better moves to put in your deck and add to your monster's repertoire.

MORE GAMES TO PLAY



» PUZZLE MASTER

■ DEVELOPER: METRO3D
■ YEAR: 1999

■ Of course there are plenty of shape and/or colour-matching puzzle games on the GBC, but *Puzzle Master* attempts to bring an array of different things to the table. For example, you get items, like keys and swords, that can be used to quickly clear columns of blocks, or open up more of the field. Furthermore, the field for each stage is different, and has different traps and things to interact with. It's a real shame it's not better known.



» SYLVANIAN MELODY - MORI NO NAKAMA TO ODORI MASHI

■ DEVELOPER: EPOCH
■ YEAR: 2000

■ Despite being based on the long-running line of expensive little animal figures aimed at young children, *Sylvanian Melody* is a brutally hard rhythm game, It plays like a simpler version of Konami's *Pop'N Music* games but only uses three buttons instead of nine, and with linear stage progression instead of song selection.



» HALLOWEEN RACER

■ DEVELOPER: VISUAL IMPACT
■ YEAR: 1999

■ For some reason, there's a fair few racing games on the Game Boy Color where it's obvious that the developers were really looking to flex their programming muscles and show off their graphical prowess. *Halloween Racer* is one such game, with pre-rendered sprites and smooth high-speed scaling and rotation. It's just a shame the game itself doesn't live up to the graphics as it's far too easy.



» PROJECT S-11

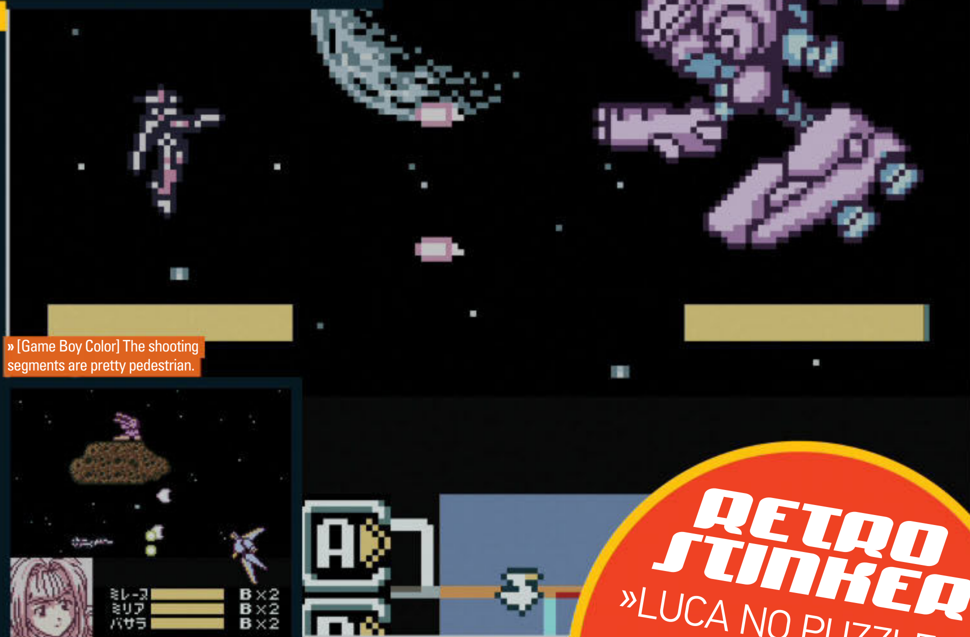
■ DEVELOPER: PARAGON 5
■ YEAR: 2001

■ Another game that features better graphics than gameplay, *Project S-11* features some nicely drawn backgrounds, and a better choice of colours than you'd see in a lower quality game, so it's obvious that no small amount of effort went into it. Unfortunately, not as much time was spent on the game's design, as it features lots of weak weapons, dull bullet sponge enemies, and long stages that seem to drag on forever.

MACROSS 7 – GINGA NO HEART O FURUWASERO

■ DEVELOPER: AISYSTEM TOKYO ■ YEAR: 2000

■ A licensed game based on a 1994 TV anime, that chronicles the adventures of the space-faring band Fire Bomber, which also happens to be pilot of a fleet of transforming fighter jets, and neither the game or its source material ever got official releases in English-speaking parts of the world. The game combines the two professions of the anime's protagonists by awkwardly combining a horizontally-scrolling shoot -'em-up with a rhythm game. Unlike some more modern combinations of the two, *Macross 7* doesn't have you dodging patterns generated by musical beats, but keeps the two genres separate. The stages take the form of some sub-gratis shooting action, that doesn't stand out in any way. The bosses represent the other half of the dual-genre arrangement, having the player attempting to dodge the boss's attacks while also pressing the A and B buttons in time to the markings on a rhythm game slider. Unfortunately, these bits aren't much good either, as there's no real feedback as to whether you're hitting your marks properly or not, and the whole stress of essentially playing two different games at once is a bit too much.



» [Game Boy Color] The rhythm-based boss sections are the videogame equivalent of rubbing your head and patting your belly at the same time.

» [Game Boy Color] The shooting segments are pretty pedestrian.

> **"Unlike modern combinations of the genres, Macross 7 doesn't have you dodging patterns generated by musical beats"**

RETRO STINKER

»LUCA NO PUZZLE DE DAIBOUKEN!

■ DEVELOPER: HUMAN ■ YEAR: 1999

■ Combining ugly, sub-Disney tweeness with soul-crushing tedium, this game chronicles the struggle of a young dolphin searching for her lost mother by solving sudoku puzzles.



» THUNDER BLAST MAN

■ DEVELOPER: SACHEN
■ YEAR: 1999

■ Despite being a pirate developer, Sachen also occasionally made original games. Not so in the case of *Thunder Blast Man*, which is a knock-off of Capcom's *Mega Man* series. It is at least a new game with its own graphics, though. It copies superficial elements of its forbear: the charging cannon, selecting your stage, instant death spikes and so on but it looks and feels a lot cheaper.



» SHIN SAN GUO SHI 2

■ DEVELOPER: UNKNOWN
■ YEAR: 200X

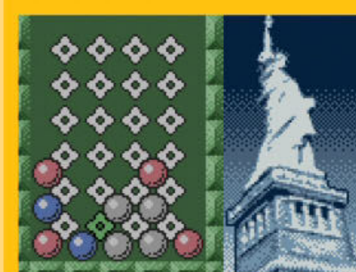
■ Another unlicensed Chinese game, this time adapting Koei's battlefield action game *Dynasty Warriors 3* into an old-fashioned beat-'em-up. The ancient china atmosphere is there, as well as various features like special moves, supers and even stocked items to use. The only real downside is that there's never more than a few enemies on screen at a time, a sharp contrast with its inspiration.



» RHINO RUMBLE

■ DEVELOPER: FORMULA
■ YEAR: 2000

■ This is a cute little platformer about a charming purple rhino that shoots fireballs from its mouth. It's got a feel to it that's very reminiscent of old 8-bit and 16-bit computers, and though the sprites aren't the most detailed you'll see on the GBC, they're all full of character, and your character is really well animated and lovable. While *Rhino Rumble* isn't anything particularly special, there's a lot of fun to be had therein.



» TROUBALLS

■ DEVELOPER: PARAGON FIVE
■ YEAR: 2001

■ An unusual puzzler, that has the player turning wheels that each have coloured orbs attached, and when four matching orbs make a square together, they disappear. Each stage has a predetermined arrangement of orbs, making it more of an literal puzzle with an actual solution than most puzzle games. Unfortunately, it's not very exciting, and if you make a stage unwinnable, it doesn't tell you, and you have to manually quit.



EUROCOM

For 24 years Eurocom quietly produced a wealth of games based on well-known names and built itself up into one of Britain's largest development houses. Yet the demo coders behind it had a troubled start, as David Crookes discovers…

When Commodore launched a phone-based interactive service provider called Compunet in the UK in 1984, it not only allowed users to send messages to each other and create their own 'areas' and access lots of software and information, it also fostered a Commodore 64 demo scene.

Scores of programmers, artists, hackers and crackers, snapped up a modem and a year's subscription for £100 before congregating on Compunet to impress each other with technological feats that pushed the boundaries of the computer's technology.

This group included Mat Sneap who produced impressive loading screens for games such as *Sanxion* by Thalamus on the Commodore 64. He was also making a name for himself with his friend Simon Hulbert as part of the demo team Mat And Psy. The duo had produced such gems as *The Metal Bar Demo* in 1986 and their strong work won them many fans and new friends.

Among them was Chris Shrigley who was working for Gremlin making games. Most of his spare time was spent dialling in on his 300-baud modem, racking up huge bills. He made contact with Mat and the pair struck up a friendship. This would eventually lead to the formation of Eurocom, one of Britain's most undervalued developers.

"We got on well and went from chatting online to chatting on the phone," says Chris of his friendship with Mat. "We found out that we lived pretty close to each other so we met and started hanging out a bit. We did some demos and called ourselves the Procoders, which was all very quaint. We also discovered that we worked really well together."

During the Eighties, Chris worked on *Bounder*, *Gauntlet II*, *Future Knight*, *Footballer Of The Year*, *Action Fighter*, *Masters Of The Universe: The Movie*, *Bulldog* and *Advanced Pinball Simulator*. He'd also been one of a number of former Gremlin employees to form Core Design in 1988. Mat produced *Knuckle Buster* for Melbourne House, *Shadow Skimmer* for The Edge and *Mission Impossibubble* for Hewson, working with musician Neil Baldwin, another Compunet regular.

But Chris wasn't happy in his work. "My relationships with [Core boss] Jeremy Heath-Smith and Core were a

little strained," he says. "The home computer market was tanking and the work I was getting to do wasn't good. There was this cool new stuff coming out of Japan on cartridges, and it was the next thing to play with. I was primed for the next step."

Chris began to think about a way out and the idea for Eurocom formed during one of his and Mat's many late night chats about games, programming, and the state of the games industry. They spoke about the noticeable swing towards consoles and saw how the business was changing. The subject of setting up a new developer was raised and the pair seriously considered it.

"Mat's dad [Ian] owned a local electronic company called Zycomm and he had contacts in Japan that were interested in developing games for NES and manufacturing the cartridges," says Chris. "It was an interesting opportunity so we plotted and planned and recruited a few other people from Compunet to buy into the crazy idea."

Chris quit his job first and became employee number one. Mat followed and three others joined them. Neil Baldwin, known as Demon in the scene, was aged 19 and he had just started in the gaming industry, producing tunes for *Shadow Skimmer* in 1987 but he quit his engineering apprenticeship in Manchester and moved to Ripley to provide some much-needed audio expertise. Tim Rogers from "Stoat And Tim" fame joined as a programmer while Hugh Binns, who had worked on *Tangent*, *Eliminator*, *Cybernoid* and *Stormlord* among others during the Eighties, was recruited as a second artist.

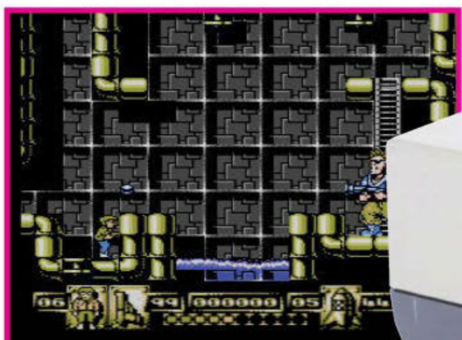
The name came as a joke –one of the team said the first name suggested would be the name used and someone quipped Eurocom – and the first game was *Magician*, a side-scrolling 2D action RPG designed by Chris and programmed by Tim. Chris had drawn up a game design and the idea was to fly to Japan and pitch it to Mat's father's contact at the publisher Taxan Kaga. "We got the greenlight we needed to actually start the company," says Chris.

Initially, Chris worked alone from an office in the corner of a conference room at Zycomm, based in the quaint Derbyshire town of Ripley. "All I had to work with was a photocopied Japanese NES development manual, a TV ▶

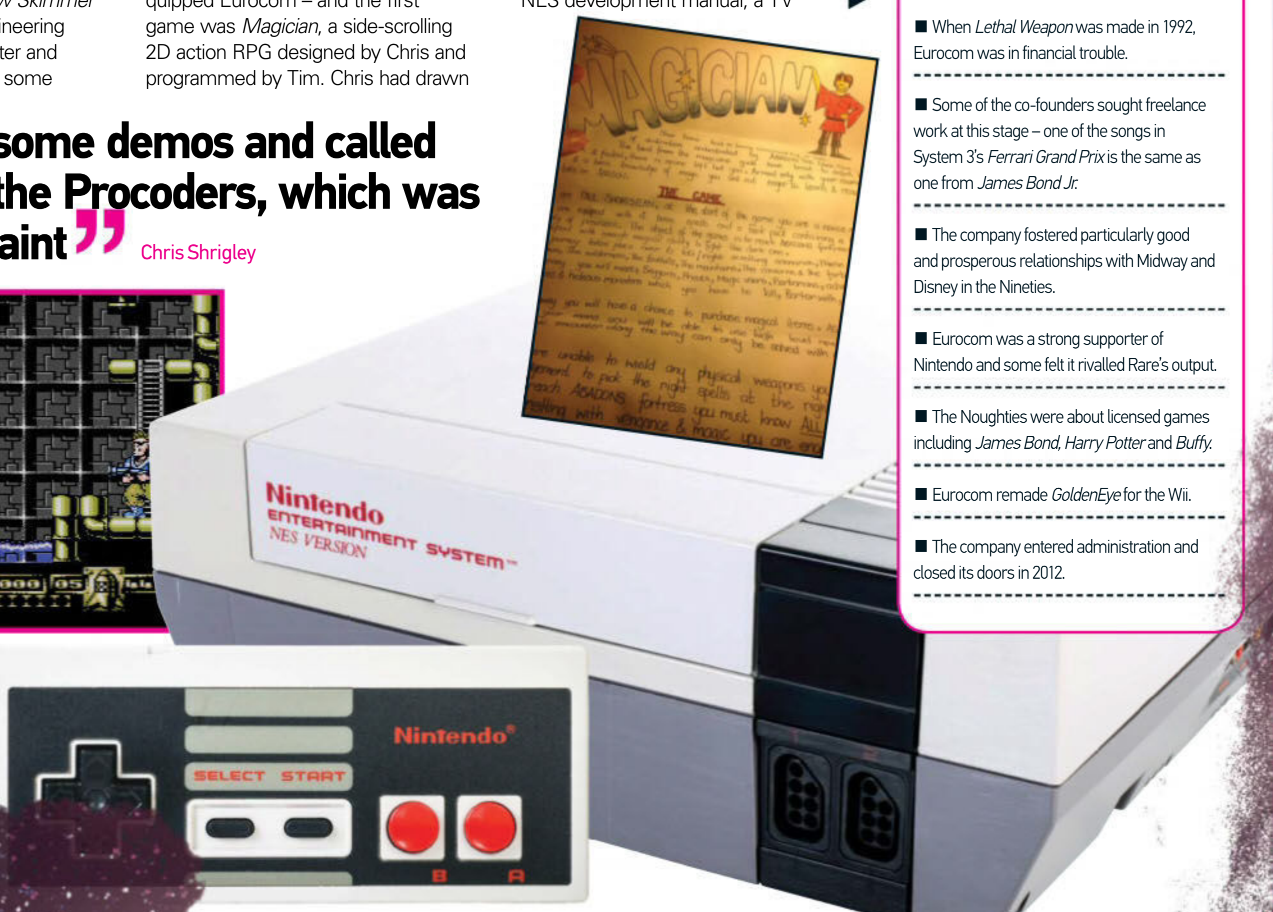


» [NES] *Magician* was a solid debut on the NES for Eurocom. It reminds us a little of *Zelda II: The Adventures Of Link*.

> **"We did some demos and called ourselves the Procoders, which was all very quaint"** Chris Shrigley



» [NES] *James Bond Jr.* nearly broke Eurocom but it still made for a cool little title, based on the animated series of the nephew of James Bond.



IN THE KNOW

- The founders of Eurocom were active users of Compunet and came from strong Commodore 64 backgrounds.
- Eurocom was created with the idea to produce games for the NES.
- Co-founder Chris Shrigley designed Eurocom's first game, *Magician*.
- Chris has released the source code to *Magician* and *James Bond Jr.* at shrigley.com
- Interestingly, Chris was never listed on Eurocom's website as a founder.
- Co-founder Mat Sneap's brother is Andy Sneap, a Grammy-winning producer, who has worked with bands such as Megadeth.
- Eurocom eventually moved into producing arcade-to-console ports.
- Co-founder Neil Baldwin wrote the music for all Eurocom's NES games.
- When *Lethal Weapon* was made in 1992, Eurocom was in financial trouble.
- Some of the co-founders sought freelance work at this stage – one of the songs in System 3's *Ferrari Grand Prix* is the same as one from *James Bond Jr.*
- The company fostered particularly good and prosperous relationships with Midway and Disney in the Nineties.
- Eurocom was a strong supporter of Nintendo and some felt it rivalled Rare's output.
- The Noughties were about licensed games including *James Bond*, *Harry Potter* and *Buffy*.
- Eurocom remade *GoldenEye* for the Wii.
- The company entered administration and closed its doors in 2012.



TIMELINE

1988 Eurocom is founded by Mat Sneap, Chris Shrigley, Hugh Binns, Tim Rogers and Neil Baldwin.

1990 *Magician* is released for the NES and becomes a fan favourite.

1991 *John Smith: Special Agent* becomes *James Bond Jr.*, Eurocom suffers financial problems.

1992 Eurocom develops its first arcade port, *Rod Land*, on the Game Boy, marking the beginning of its arcade porting era.

1993 The company continues to make handheld ports, including *Tesserae* and *Sensible Soccer.*

1994 A deal with Disney is struck and is a turning point for the company. *The Jungle Book* is produced.

1995 Eurocom develops a much-needed six-button controlled port of *Super Street Fighter II Turbo* for PC.

1996 Staff numbers at Eurocom rise as demand increases and the 32-bit console games production begins.

1997 The *Mortal Kombat*-like beat-'em-up *War Gods* is released for the N64 as well as PlayStation.

A sanitised version of *Duke Nukem 3D* for the N64 debuts.

1998 Eurocom moves to larger premises.

2000 Another *James Bond* game is made, this time it's *The World Is Not Enough* for the N64.

2002 Having produced *Crash Bash* in 2000, Eurocom continues the franchise with *Crash Bandicoot: The Wrath Of Cortex.*

2003 *Sphinx And The Cursed Mummy* is released to critical acclaim from critics.

2005 *Batman Begins* is among a host of licensed games with others based on *Harry Potter* and *Buffy.*

2009 Eurocom co-produces the *Dead Space* spin-off, *Dead Space Extraction* for the Nintendo Wii console. It's excellent.

2010 A remake of *GoldenEye 007* is created, again, for the Wii.

2011 Eurocom opens a motion capture studio.

2012 Mounting financial problems force Eurocom to close. Eurocom blames less demand in games.

set and an exploded NES with wires soldered on to various chips and components," he says. "I worked with one of Zycomm's electronics engineers, as he reverse-engineered the hardware." A couple of students helped to decipher the manual.

Chris tested every iteration of the development board as it came out of the Zycomm workshop. "I'd sit for hours poking different values into registers to see what would happen on screen," he said. "I documented and cross-referenced my discoveries with the Japanese manual illustrations and diagrams. After a couple of weeks, I'd pretty much figured out the NES hardware and we had a functional and passable development board that allowed us to send code over a wire."

Bit by bit, the other team members joined and they moved to a cold, drafty construction behind the main Zycomm building. As Mat provided the background images for *Magician*, Hugh the animation and Neil the music, the team worked on creating better working facilities, having the building rewired and decorated. "We had to work with coats and gloves on," says Chris. "It didn't matter though. We were having an amazing time."



M*agician* was ready for release in 1990 on the NES and it sold well, setting up the company for a second game, *John Smith: Special Agent* on the NES. Yet things hadn't gone as smoothly this time. About three quarters through development, Taxan pulled the plug. Chris finished the game regardless, but Eurocom struggled to find a buyer.

"There was worry and stress," says Chris. "Mat's dad started financing the company and there was pressure to get the game finished. I was working more than 14 hours a day, six or seven days a week. My wife and I had a baby and there was pressure from home to be there. I had some huge blowups with Mat over stupid stuff, and relationships were a little bit strained all around.

Then it got worse. We were put on a three-day working week and our salaries were slashed. This was when I decided I had to leave."



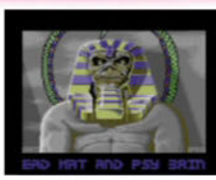
» [SNES] Based on an action figure line and animated series, *Stone Protectors* was a good example of a licensed Eurocom game.

THQ eventually took the game. It was renamed *James Bond Jr.* and some extra work was carried out on it ahead of its release in 1991. The remaining Eurocom founders then quickly moved into producing home computer ports and arcade conversions, starting with *Lethal Weapon* in 1992 and continuing with a host of games as diverse as *Rod Land* on the Game Boy, *Sensible Soccer* for Game Gear and *Earthworm Jim* on Game Boy and Game Gear. Eurocom gained a reputation for quality work.

In the first few years, the team mucked in together with Neil, working on scripting the unreleased NES version of *Erik The Viking* in 1992, a game based upon a children's novel by Terry Jones. Tim would help to refine people's programming skills and there was a good sense of camaraderie. But they took on defined roles.

Neil – who had fostered a love of music in games when playing *Monty*

THE DNA OF EUROCOM



A desire to impress

The founders of Eurocom were regulars on Compunet which they used to indulge their passion for game and coding. The demo scene thrived on the service, encouraging enthusiasts to push boundaries. The quiet desire to produce games that caught the attention of gamers was therefore part of the co-founders' make-up.



An eye for opportunity

Whether it was noticing that the industry was shifting from home computers to console or adapting to the changes that occurred in the mid-Nineties as Sony muscled in on the gaming territory of Nintendo and Sega, Eurocom managed to spot new markets and overcome their potential challenges. Until 2012 anyway.



Gaming conversions

The first games produced by Eurocom were original titles (*James Bond Jr.* was prototyped as *John Smith: Special Agent*) but financial issues forced Eurocom's hand. Known for its ability to produce strong conversions of games, such ports formed the bulk of the developer's business and led to a somewhat eclectic series of titles.





On The Run and who produced his own tunes following the release of the C64's synthesizer and sequencer, Electrosound – became audio director. Mat was art director and Hugh was a studio director. Tim assumed the role of technical director.

"All the directors were excellent at what they did," says Kris Adcock, a software engineer and tools programmer who began work at Eurocom in 1998. "Tim was the senior coding guy and he was incredibly softly spoken but knew his stuff. Mat was very driven and because he was so obsessive and picky, Eurocom games always looked lovely. Hugh was, as he often said himself, the old man of the group: the sensible one who often did the meet-and-greet with important visitors and the one who drove the old man's car – the Jaguar. He was also an awful driver. Neil was a quiet individual. He was all about the audio side of things – he seemed to be happy to hide in the soundproofed rooms all day."

Eurocom grew. It moved to larger offices in Heanor, eight miles northeast of Derby, and it would enter a very creative period. Neil, for instance, had written a MIDI-based audio system and game composer Steve Duckworth was taken on to work on producing music for Nintendo machines. The company was also attracting some big projects. Archer Maclean asked Eurocom to produce a SNES version of *Dropzone*. Meanwhile, Chris ended up working for Disney in the mid-Nineties and, he says, helped Eurocom secure a vital contract.

"Eurocom had weathered the storms and had managed to come through by the skin of their teeth," Chris says. "They were looking for work and we were looking for developers. I flew to England as part of a small team, to conduct the due diligence and vetting process on behalf of Disney. It was odd and surreal to meet the old gang again, this time in a nicer conference room, in their own offices but everything went well and when we got back to the States, my recommendation was to give them the gig. They ended up doing *Jungle Book* for us in 1994. Disney even paid them a monthly retainer."

Shortly after, the industry moved to 3D. Eurocom developed *Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3* on the Sega Saturn. But it decided against being a platform-exclusive developer. One of its standout titles was a conversion of *Cruis'n World* for the N64. The game added a four-player mode and it had better handling and a drift mode overlaid. The original arcade developer Eurgene Jarvis and his Midway team lent a hand.

Those who worked at Eurocom say the firm mixed work and fun with staff regularly engaging in lunchtime LAN sessions. Further expansion came at the end of the Nineties when Eurocom took over an old timber merchant in Ashbourne Road, Derby, and converted it into a block named Eurocom House. The conversions kept coming too – *Duke Nukem 64* in 1997, *Mortal Kombat 4* ▶

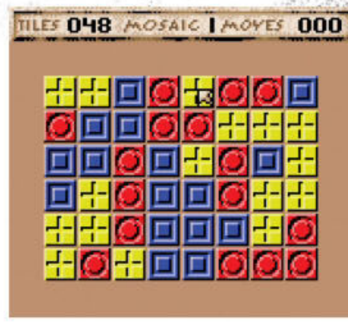


» [SNES] Archer Maclean's *Super Dropzone* was a 16-bit reimagining of the classic 8-bit game.



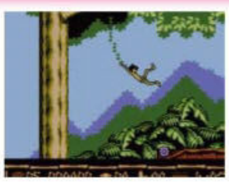
» [SNES] Thought of as the proper sequel to *Kick Off 2*, the SNES version of *Dino Dini's Goal* was developed by Eurocom.

» [Game Gear] Eurocom proved to be something of a handheld specialist and it was also asked to port *Sensible Soccer* to the Game Gear.



» [Game Gear] Eurocom was tasked with looking after the handheld versions of the puzzle game *Tesserae*.

> **"Mat was very driven and because he was so obsessive and picky, Eurocom games always looked lovely"** Kris Adcock on setting standards



Legendary tunes

One of Eurocom's greatest strokes of luck was to have Neil Baldwin on board, a computer musician who wanted to be like Rob Hubbard but who became renowned for being talented in his own right. Although coding and other responsibilities didn't allow him to fully concentrate on writing music, the scores he did produce were widely admired.



Strong independence

At no point – not even when the company was in its death throes – did Eurocom relinquish its independence and nor did it seek to destroy that of others. Instead, the company was free to produce games for whichever publisher or platform it wanted to and it was able to grow organically as a result of this.



Licensed games

In the second half of its life, licensed games became an important revenue stream for Eurocom, even though in 2006 Hugh Binns said there were pitfalls regarding deadlines. He also took a swipe at 'poor quality' licences that didn't take advantage of the source material. *Harry Potter* and *Buffy* were among Eurocom's best received licenses.



James Bond

Eurocom made enough *007* games for it to be referred to as the *James Bond* developer. Most of its games fared well but *GoldenEye 007* – the remake of the Rare classic – was the best received of them all. Still, it must have pained Eurocom to bow out with *007 Legends*, a game that was routinely panned by any critic unfortunate enough to play it.



A talented city

Eurocom was formed in Derby, a city with a strong history of videogaming. It has a road called Lara Croft Way thanks to Core Design having been based in area. It was also the location for Rebellion Derby, Free Radical and Strawdog Studios. This allowed for a talent base to flourish that Eurocom was frequently able to tap into.



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Chris Shrigley
When Chris left Eurocom, he freelanced for Gremlin and worked for Acme Interactive, Malibu Interactive, Western Technologies and Disney Interactive among others. Today, he works as an independent videogame developer and a consultant on titles for the PC, Mac and mobile devices.

Neil Baldwin
When Eurocom bit the dust, Neil did not follow the other directors in setting up Eight Pixels Square and instead founded Marmot Audio, a company which provides music, sound design and effects for games. His contribution to gaming music has been recognised, though. He was given a True Chip Till Death Award for Best Software for the Nijuu app which he released for the NES chipmusic community.

Kris Adcock
Having left Eurocom in 2007, Kris went to work as a software engineer at Roscom for a year before becoming a senior gameplay programmer at Rebellion Derby. He has since had stints at Sony Computer Entertainment Europe and Codemasters. In April last year, he began to work for Rare as an engine programmer.

Alex Davis
Alex was among the 40 former Eurocom employees who were taken on by Eight Pixels Square following the former's collapse and he continues to work as a programmer at the company, utilising gaming experience which stretches back to 1989 when he began his career at Gremlin Graphics.

Mat Sneap, Hugh Binns and Tim Rogers
Following the collapse of Eurocom, Mat, Hugh and Tim bought much of the company's equipment and set up Eight Pixels Square in the same building. Taking on 40 of Eurocom's former employees, Eight Pixels Square has produced big hits such as *Lawless* for smartphones and tablets. It has also made *Cartel Kings* and *All Guns Blazing*.





"There were breakfast dishes piled up amongst documents, and empty cereal packets"
Hard work was the order of the day

» [PC] The success Eurocom brought to the Olympics franchise allowed it to continue with *Beijing 2008* – the official videogame of the Olympic Games



» [PS2] Before *Beijing 2008* came *Athens 2004* – again, the official videogame of the Olympic Games, this time for Sony Computer Entertainment.



▶ in 1999 – mixed in with originals such as *Machine Hunter* in 1997 and the PlayStation-exclusive *40 Winks* in 1999 (a planned N64 version was cancelled).

When Krisalis Software closed in November 2001, Eurocom took on many of its programmers, adding names such as Richard Teather and Andy Ware to its roster. Indeed Eurocom worked with some great talent. Jonny Duddle who went on to be a writer and illustrator of children's books is given thanks on *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End*; Mark Povey was a animator for Cosgrove Hall; Julian Walshaw-Vaughan went from being a Senior Software Engineer from 1995 to 2004 to becoming Vice-President and CTO of Electronics Arts in Canada.

Still, working at Eurocom was hard work. There was a crunch culture with long hours, which intensified with the numerous film tie-ins made by the firm, such as *Tarzan*, for the PSone, N64 and PC. It was not unknown for developers to work from 9am to 2am six days a week for months on end. "If we didn't get the game into mass-production, the game wouldn't be out on the same day as the film and that would mean a lot of revenue would be lost," explains Kris. "We'd work long hours to hit the deadline, on the understanding that when the game was out and done we could all go to bed for the next month."

Yet they were using good tools, with Eurocom never scrimping on the servers or technology. Kris says the hours demanded of workers were only those the management was willing to do themselves: "I have clear memories of my producer spending so much time eating and sleeping in his office that we used to have to remind him to go home and wash. There were breakfast dishes piled up amongst documents, and empty cereal packets on the floor."

In order to maximise revenues and spread the risk, Eurocom sought to have around six teams working on games at different stages of development so that money was always coming in. Some would work on the *James Bond* title *007: The World Is Not Enough* on the N64, for example, while others would produce *Crash Bash* on PlayStation (taking the franchise from Naughty Dog for the first time). More *Crash* and *James Bond* games were released and then, around the time of the introduction of Xbox and PS2 titles, Eurocom looked to change the way it worked.

Up until that point, says Kris, the developer maintained its own core-routines and took them over to the next project they were assigned. A separate team would maintain the world editor, and provide a framework where a senior programmer on the team could write the 'exporter' code that would get the world data into their game. But then an in-house engine was developed. "At the time, there was quite a lot of dissent because everyone was used to how

MOVIES, GAMES AND VIDEOS

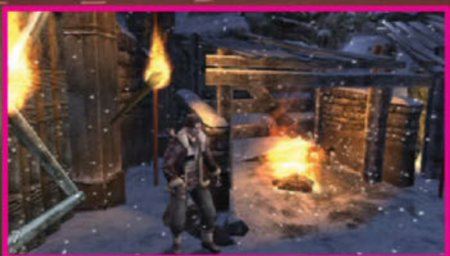
Eurocom's bread-and-butter work – especially by the end of the Nineties – was producing games based on the hit movies of the day. It had built a strong relationship with Disney, which was supplemented by deals with the likes of Universal. For the employees, it raised the bar of excitement, not least because the film companies would let them watch top movies well in advance of the public so that they could faithfully base their games on them.

"We would get to see art assets, the script, the plot outline, and see regular versions of the films as they were made," says Kris Adcock, a software engineer and tools programmer. "Obviously, security and secrecy was very important, so the VHS tape of the latest iteration of the film was escorted down by someone from Disney, then we'd watch it, then he'd take it away again – it was never allowed out of his sight, so there could be no chance of a leak."









» [PS2] As well as the PS2 version, Eurocom also made the Wii version of *The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor.*



» [PS3] *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End* allowed Eurocom to reap the rewards of a deal with Disney.

they were working but looking back on it, I think it was the correct decision," Kris explains. "Although people liked to poke holes in the Eurocom engine, it actually compares well against all the engines I've used in games since."

The change in how people worked led to central teams for engine and tools development, information systems, audio and animation. They supported up to four game teams which, says assistant lead programmer Alex Davis, tended to keep a common core of leads and seniors, with other team members moving between projects as required.

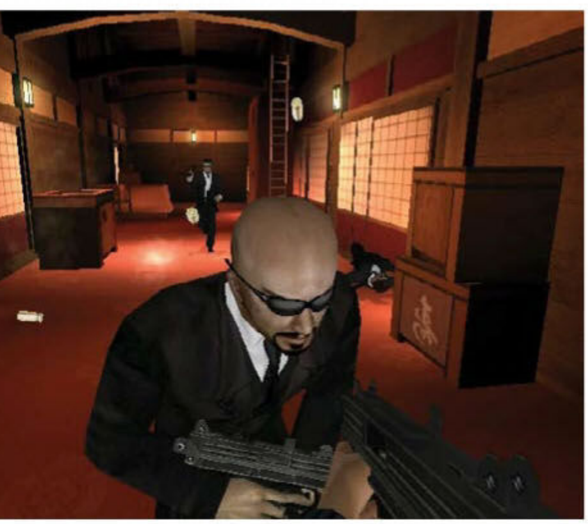
Some of the biggest selling titles in the industry were being developed. As well as *James Bond*, there were games based on *Harry Potter*, *Batman* and *Pirates Of The Caribbean*. There were sports titles too. Alex joined in 2007 and he worked on the PS3 version of *Beijing 2008* before staying with his team to work on *Vancouver 2010*. He also worked on the tie-in with the film *Rio*.

"After that I worked on *GoldenEye: Reloaded* and then moved onto the Core Technology team, occasionally moonlighting on *Bond Legend*," he says. "My roles tended to involve speccing or working on shared or bespoke tech, along with a large amount of firefighting and bug fixing."

In 2011, Eurocom became very ambitious and built its own motion capture studio. "We'd had a motion capture team for several years who worked off-site before the facility was built," says Alex. "I don't know the exact reasoning, but I guess it made sense from a business point of view. It was used on *GoldenEye 007 Reloaded*, *007 Legends* and a few others. And yet the company was in serious trouble.

By November 2012, it became apparent that cash flow was becoming problematic and on the 24th of that month, 155 people were made redundant. Eurocom retained 42 employees and sought financial experts to restructure the business, blaming falling demand for PS3, Wii and Xbox games. Eurocom had grown to become one of the largest games studios in the UK but the end was nigh. Not even 700,000 sales of *GoldenEye 007* could save it. On 7 December 2012, the company closed following a period of administration and it brought the curtain down on 24 years of development. ✱

» [Xbox] *James Bond 007: Nightfire* was another of Eurocom's first-person shooters starring everyone's favourite British secret agent.



DEFINING GAMES

Magician 1991

This action RPG was a challenging game that offered three quests jam-packed with puzzles and tough enemies. Viewed by some as the console's hidden gem, the game revolved around the wizard apprentice, Paul, on a mission to produce a potion that would defeat the corrupt magician, Abadon. It was produced by all five of Eurocom's founders, beginning the developers' fruitful relationship with Nintendo's consoles.



Duke Nukem 64 1997

Duke Nukem 3D shot to gamer's hearts in 1996 and Eurocom was asked to make a version for the Nintendo 64. The game introduced a split-screen, four-player Dukematch mode while also adding co-op play and secret areas. But the biggest changes came at the behest of Nintendo, forcing Eurocom to cut the more controversial aspects of the game. Even so, this beautifully-designed blockbuster won itself many devoted fans.



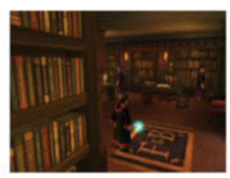
007: The World Is Not Enough 2000

Although Eurocom developed *James Bond Jr.* for the NES and SNES in 1992, the company's reputation as a *007* developer didn't truly begin until it worked on this shooter for the N64. Despite a multiplayer option, 14 levels, 40 gadgets and weapons, it didn't match Rare's *GoldenEye* but the game was still a turning point for Eurocom. As the decade wore on, it worked on *Nightfire*, *Quantum Of Solace* and remade *GoldenEye*.



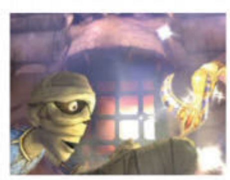
Harry Potter And The Chamber Of Secrets 2002

If Eurocom's earlier years had been known for its knack for porting popular titles such as, *Sensible Soccer* and *Earthworm Jim* , then its later years were all about the franchises and *Harry Potter* was a standout moment. The game gave access to free-flight mode and it mixed strong gameplay with sharp graphics.



Sphinx And The Cursed Mummy 2003

Eurocom still found time for original titles and, in 2001, began to develop the ambitious third-person, fantasy action adventure game, *Sphinx*, releasing it three years later for the GameCube, PS2 and Xbox. Drawing heavily on Egyptian iconography and mythology, it was influenced by *Zelda* and benefitted from Eurocom's bespoke, advanced 3D game engine. It was also clearly put together with passion and a smart design philosophy.



DUKE NUKEM 3D



Back in 1996 it was time to kick ass and chew gum, but the Duke was all out of gum. Ian Dransfield went to buy him a new pack. Let's rock!

Duke is pissed: "Damn, those alien bastards are gonna pay for shooting up my ride!" He loads his gun, and thus, *Duke Nukem 3D* begins. It was a story, sort of, steeped in the kind of mid-Nineties semi-satirical machismo we were seeing in the era. Everyone was laughing at the Arnies and Stallones of the Eighties, and the Duke came along as the movie-quoting, bicep-flexing, ultraviolence-dealing exclamation point to everyone's wry laughter. He also, in *Duke Nukem 3D*, provided us with one of gaming's true greats – a first-person shooter that didn't just raise the bar, but removed it from its housing and flung it over a nearby building (before blowing the building up). The Duke might have been taking the Mickey out of the past, but his 1996 outing was very much a sign of things to come in the future.

At first glance, *Duke Nukem 3D* is the same as any other Doom clone of the early-to-mid-Nineties. The same superpowered shotguns, the same wireframe maps, the same 'episodes' and 'missions' structure – even par times to beat on levels. But from the first time you fired your gun, you knew this was something different – environmental



» [PC] The shotgun's power is immense. It's also extremely satisfying to use.



PIXEL PERFECT

Which of these alien toilets is going to pay for shooting up Duke's ride?



Q&A SCOTT MILLER

The founder of 3D Realms takes us all the way back to Duke's genesis



Let's start with the obvious: why was *Duke 3D* made?
The first two platformer *Duke* games were very successful and fans seemed to like the character. So, when it came time to make a third *Duke* game, we also knew the future was 3D games, so it was a no-brainer to do the third *Duke* game as a 3D game… well, the best 3D we could do at the time, since true 3D still wasn't something we could pull off when we started making *Duke 3D*.

The competition up to that point was *Doom* and its ilk, but around the time you popped up so did *Quake* – was there a worry that an 'older' looking game wouldn't compete with the new 3D one?
Big time! Id Software was still in their glory days at that time, at least two years ahead of anyone else in the industry. So of course we knew *Quake* was coming and would destroy us, technology-wise. But knowing that they were technical superior forced us to try to compete in other ways, such as having a character with a personality, interactive environments, innovative weapons, and levels that appeared to be real-life locations.

Was it planned from day one to be so secret-rich, full of non-linear exploration?
Not really. These things just happen over time, and this is often true of a large percentage of released successful games. For example, when we started the *Max Payne* project we had no clue that we'd eventually come up with the idea of bullet-time. A *lot* of this cool stuff in *Duke* was the result of our talented level designers having an idea and giving the idea a try. Many of these ideas are abandoned, but most often the best ones stick in the game.

A lot of people – us included – wasted a lot of time playing pool in *Duke Nukem 3D*…
That's a great example of unplanned design. Originally, the pool table and the pinball game were totally static. But the main coder decided to spend a few hours giving these two things a bare bones level of interactivity, and these two-three hours of effort made *Duke* so much more memorable!

***Duke 3D* is always spoken about alongside controversy – how do you look back on that period now? Did it even have any impact?**
After we released *Wolfenstein 3D*, we learned the immense value of controversy in creating buzz and magazine articles for the game, which of course just generates even more interest. So, with *Duke Nukem 3D*, we purposely designed some controversy into the game. We think the new impact was overall very positive.

***Duke 3D* has been converted to all manner of formats – do you have a favourite version? Why?**
Unquestionably the PC version. Nothing beats the keyboard and mouse!



» [PC] All hail the Mighty Foot!

destruction, a proto-open level structure, allowing you to explore to a limited extent, full-3D movement as soon as you picked up a jet pack. *DN3D* was quick to throw these elements at you, almost desperate to show it had more ideas than the average *Doom*-alike.

While the speed at which you discover new things – walking down a hallway and an earthquake occurs, misshaping the level and changing it permanently – surely helped draw in new players and reviewers back in the day, there really was no need. People would have played it regardless, and its unique qualities would have shone through. The fact you have to actually explore every nook and cranny in a level to find out where to go next; that the whole range of 3D space (and, yes, platforming skills) came into

"We purposely designed some controversy into the game"
Scott Miller

play; how the aforementioned level deformation could be caused by the player, sometimes *had* to be in order to progress… it was just a new way of playing an FPS.

There were a thousand and one little touches too, like mirrors that showed your reflection. Duke would comment on how great he looked, then you realised you were able to see around the corner with the reflective surface, revealing an alien enemy lying in wait. It was form *and* function. Using the toilet was funny – it was, don't argue – but it also replenished health. Being shrunk by an enemy wasn't just a natty effect in perspective and scale shifts – you could use your small size to reach hitherto unreachable areas. Things were thought out cleverly, added in to bring something new and fulfilling



» [PC] The action didn't stay on terra firma, with Duke ending up on the Moon at one point.



EXPANSION PACKS

DUKE IT OUT IN DC 1997

■ Created by the winner of a level design contest, Duke's adventures with the President Of The Unites States – Bill Clinton makes an appearance – proved little more than a novelty. These days it's honestly not much fun.



DUKE CARIBBEAN: LIFE'S A BEACH 1997

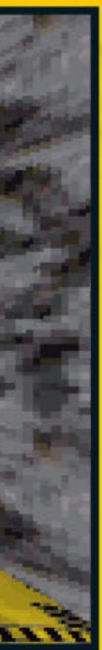
■ A new, sunnier skivan for Duke, his weapons, enemies and locales made more of a difference than you might think. *Life's A Beach* is a fun, lighthearted romp and is still a fun distraction.



DUKE: NUCLEAR WINTER 1997

■ Fighting snowmen and a brainwashed Santa is silly in the best way – *Nuclear Winter* was notorious for featuring a recreation of a little bit of E1M1 from *Doom*, and didn't get much praise from fans for reusing old *DN3D* levels.







» [PC] Even Duke's end-of-level flourish was OTT, smashing the destruct button with his fist.


» [PC] Security cameras are now a trope – when *Duke 3D* came out they were revelatory.

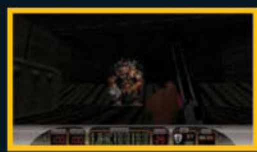
to the game beyond just shooting the invading alien armies and finding a red, blue or yellow keycard to open the endlessly locked doors.

But how *Duke Nukem 3D* really succeeded was in how it mixed all of these unfamiliar, new and exciting elements with the old, tried-and-tested formulas we'd grown to know and love thanks to *Doom* and its pretenders. Quick-paced, reliant on twitch skills and memory of enemy placement over raw skill, *DN3D*'s shooting mechanics were tight. We had to get used to the game being in 3D – the clue was in the title – with all the up-and-down (and diagonal!) aiming that made for, but it was responsive and forgiving enough to not require absolute accuracy. Enemies were the of the kinds you would, while not initially knowing, quickly get accustomed to – grunts went down easily, while the tougher pig cops (satire!) were dangerous if you didn't spot them. Octabrains were just buggers, frankly.

Probably the best example of this mix of the old and new, though, was in *DN3D*'s level design. There were mazes – the true old school map design of the FPS – riddled with secrets and hidden nasties to uncover, rewarding exploration as ▶

BOSS RUSH

With just four bosses across the main DN3D campaign, you'd expect them to be a challenge. Clue: they are



BATTLELORD

WHAT IS IT?

■ The first boss you meet in *DN3D*, the Battlelord bursts explosively through a wall and shocks the player with the fact that… well, if you get near him, he can step on you resulting in insta-death. It's a wake-up call for those cruising through the first handful of levels.

HOW DO I BEAT IT?

■ You want to avoid the Shrinker, as ol' Batty is immune to that. Stick with the RPG or, if you've ammo for it, the Devastator. Don't get too close as he'll step on you, and watch out for both his speed and his mortar fire.



OVERLORD

WHAT IS IT?

■ He looks less threatening than the first boss, but don't let ol' frog-features fool you – the guardian of the second episode is a hard one to beat. On encountering the Overlord, Duke threatens to 'rip off his head and shit down his neck'. *He actually does this.*

HOW DO I BEAT IT?

■ Similarly to the Battlelord, you should keep your distance from the Overlord and not use the Shrinker. Circle strafe, circle strafe and circle strafe with the RPG or Devastator – if you stay still for even a second you're at serious risk of death.



CYCLOID EMPEROR

WHAT IS IT?

■ The original release's last boss Duke encounters the Cycloid Emperor in a huge stadium at the end of the third chapter. This giant cyclops is leader of the alien invasion force and, as you would expect, needs to be taken down a notch. Or just shot.

HOW DO I BEAT IT?

■ You should stick to the RPG or Devastator. He doesn't step on Duke, so there's no worry there, but his attacks do huge damage and the direction of his rockets is difficult to predict. Keep moving, keep shooting and rely on luck.



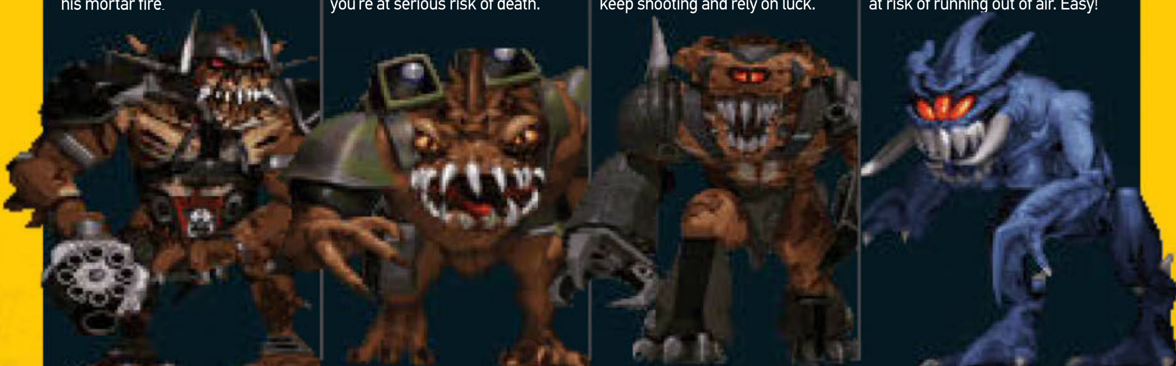
ALIEN QUEEN

WHAT IS IT?

■ The final-final boss added in *DN3D*'s *Atomic Edition*, the Alien Queen is a bizarre beast located underwater. She's the mother of all the Protector Drones – and you find this out thanks to the fact she births them during the fight – and is the toughest enemy in the game.

HOW DO I BEAT IT?

■ RPG and Devastator time, obviously. Don't go near her, as she will kill you instantly. It's difficult to avoid her electrified water attack. Also she spawns Protector Drones. Oh, and you're underwater so are at risk of running out of air. Easy!




» [PC] It may not have had 3D models, but it more than made it for that with its great use of 3D space.


» [PC] These first appeared in the *Atomic Edition*, and have the ability to shrink Duke.


» [PC] There's little in life more satisfying than freezing and shattering those alien bastards.

DUKE!ZONE 1996

■ Not an official release, but one that was given the nod by the money men, *Duke!Zone* brought together 500 levels created by users into one package. Most were rubbish, but there are some decent ones to discover in there.



DUKE!ZONE II 1997

■ *Duke!Zone II* changed the format, bringing 21 levels across three episodes all designed in-house at WizardWorks – as well as the 500 user levels from before. Even with the added quality control, though, the reception was frosty.



DUKE XTREME 1997

■ *Xtreme* added 50 levels – 25 single-player, 25 multiplayer – and a bunch of hacks disguised as options, including the ability to destroy cameras and changing the effects of some weapons. The levels weren't liked, but the hacks were pretty good.



DUKE ASSAULT 1997

■ A low point for an already poor collection of expansions, *Duke Assault* was the result of International Software Values Inc. trawling through the internet to find user maps, then slapping over 1,500 of them on the disc.



DUKE NUKEM'S PENTHOUSE PARADISE 1997

■ A free level created by GT Interactive itself, this adventure in smut saw Duke encounter more realistic 'babes' of the penthouse variety. Nobody seemed to pay attention to how it actually played, because there were naked women in it. Satire died that day.

DUKE – IT'S ZERO HOUR 1997

■ A total conversion once assumed to be dead after a publishing deal fell through, it did eventually see a release for free. 11 new levels, 12 new monsters, five new weapons and all the audio and visual changes you'd expect, it was… alright, actually.

CONVERSION CAPERS

The Duke has made his presence known on many formats for two decades now, and every time it's been a surprise



PSONE
1997

■ The '*3D*' was removed from the title, replaced in the US with '*Total Meltdown*', and in Europe with… nothing. While the Saturn version was superior, Duke's PlayStation outing saw an exclusive episode.

SATURN
1997

■ A great port for Sega's console saw analogue and online support, a 3D engine developed in-house at Lobotomy Software and a secret game in *Death Tank Zwei*. This is one of the times when the Saturn beat the PSone.





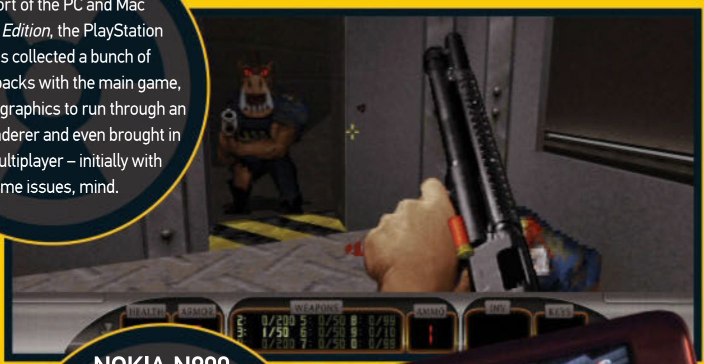
GAME.COM
1997

■ A bizarre conversion, given its limitations, Duke on Game.com was unable to turn – he only moved forwards, backwards or strafed side to side. As such this version was slow, and very limited. But it is, at least, a curio.

> **"Duke Nukem 3D is a well-known IP, so we figured there must be a decent fanbase"**
> Ralph Egas

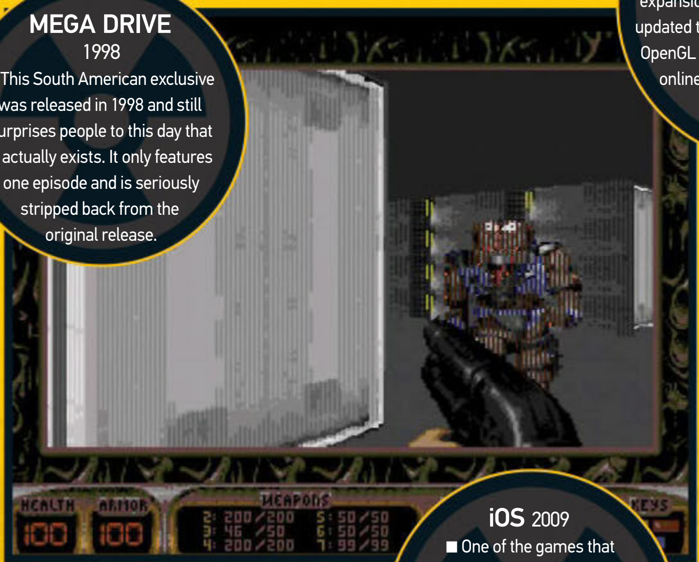
PS3, Vita 2015

■ A port of the PC and Mac *Megaton Edition*, the PlayStation versions collected a bunch of expansion packs with the main game, updated the graphics to run through an OpenGL renderer and even brought in online multiplayer – initially with some issues, mind.



MEGA DRIVE
1998

■ This South American exclusive was released in 1998 and still surprises people to this day that it actually exists. It only features one episode and is seriously stripped back from the original release.



NOKIA N900
2009

■ An unofficial version of *DN3D*, those keen on tweaking their hardware found they could get it running on the keyboard-sporting phone. Using a QWERTY set-up to play, it was fiddly, but a fun little distraction… at least until hand cramps set in.



iOS 2009

■ One of the games that have tried to tackle to controls on touchscreen devices, *DN3D* on iOS actually saw some success with its lock-on function. It also featured a new engine for the game and a selection of control schemes.





NINTENDO 64
1997

■ In classic Nintendo fashion, Duke's outing on N64 was heavily censored. Still, it was reworked in a way similar to *Doom 64*, with 3D models replacing some – not all – sprites.



XBOX LIVE 2008

■A recreation of the PC game, *DN3D* on Xbox 360 threw in the ability to rewind to an earlier point, handy for if you missed a jump and plummeted to your death, say. Online play was also included, and it saw some popularity around its release back in 2009.



▶ much as they punished it. But they were, in the most part, set in the real world. Los Angeles was even name-checked, and though the representation didn't exactly match up to the real thing – it was much cleaner in Duke's world (satire!) – it brought the FPS in from the cold, away from the more abstract designs that had come before it. You walked down streets, visited shops, even went to an American Football stadium – it was more real than most of what had come before, but it was all wrapped in a familiar structure we could all understand. The power of good level design should never be forgotten when remembering *Duke Nukem 3D*.

Multiplayer even gave a good account of itself, with Dukematch a popular outlet for countless players for many a year. Again, it was something *Quake*, the main competition, did better on a technical level. But Duke battling Duke (and other Dukes) had nailed that fun factor like never before, showing yet another example of the technically inferior product holding its own against that glorious new thing.

Despite all of that, *Duke Nukem 3D*'s never going to go down in history with an unblemished record – the controversy of the day might have faded, with the graphical representations of the strippers and sex workers laughable at best. But the attitudes presented by the game in such an uncaring manner, along with boorish, lad-like sexist jokes have seen their day come and go. It's



» [PC] Duke's Caribbean adventure saw besuited aliens and water pistols.

a game with issues – ones we see as different to those in the mid-Nineties – but looking past them, as it is fortunately possible to do, you're left with a truly great first-person shooter. It always looked back in the day like *Quake* would absolutely trounce 3D Realms' effort, but both managed to survive and thrive in a world that valued creativity and imagination just as much as it did technological prowess and progress.

The ludicrous wait and eventual terrible quality of *Duke Nukem Forever* – along with the generally bad expansion packs for *DN3D* and the awful ventures into the world of third-person shooters for Duke – have had an impact on how the series is viewed, and with good cause. But we need to remember to look past that, back to *Duke Nukem 3D* – the game that showed us just how much could be done with a bit of imagination, a pocketful of sexism and a highly creative studio. *Doom* put the genre on the map, while *Quake* moved it forward a few steps – but it was the *Duke* who, while starring in a shooter that was behind the curve even when it came out, showed us the way forward. Hail to the King, baby. ✱



» [PC] Get killed in *Duke Nukem 3D* and you'll be treating to this very unnerving viewpoint.

Q&A RALPH EGAS

The CEO of Abstraction Games shares his thoughts on why porting Duke to PS3 and Vita involved such 'hardcore engineering'



Were you worried about porting such an old game?

Not at all. Porting the game itself was done pretty rapidly, but, in retrospect, what we should have been worried about was online multiplayer, notably the networking support. That literally took a year to get working well enough to warrant a proper online experience. Lesson learned. The problem was that *Duke* was built for LAN parties where there's close to zero latency, and the network support was deeply embedded into the code, with the gameplay directly tied to that. The thought of releasing the game on PlayStation without online multiplayer support would have been considered a major letdown for us, which is why we chose to take care of that part first.

What was the process in getting hold of the *Duke Nukem* licence like?

I wouldn't know, because we were actually approached by Devolver Digital which had already obtained the licence!

And why bring it to modern consoles as you did?

Duke Nukem 3D is a well-known IP, so we figured there must be a decent fanbase. I believe the game was downloaded well over a million times from PSN, so I guess that confirms our expectations!

Were there any issues in making the jump to modern platforms?

Only the networking part, really. As long as you stick to the original behaviour and visuals, save for some new meta content like achievements and such, it's not too hard to get something like that working, at least not for us, due to our significant background in adapting games to other platforms, new and old.

Was there anything in particular that you added to *Duke Nukem 3D*?

Well, we added stuff like achievements, which are mandatory on modern consoles, but we also took quite some time getting the controls right. Not something new feature-wise, but you simply cannot bluntly port stuff over to something new and leave it at that. There's always something new when you want to properly port a game to another platform. We call this tailoring.

What was the best thing about working on the ports of *Duke Nukem 3D*?

The sheer challenge, honestly! Doing ports is super hardcore engineering, which is exactly the kind of thing we live for! The networking got us in a pretty harsh position, but we figured it out eventually, and that sort of thing is always very rewarding.

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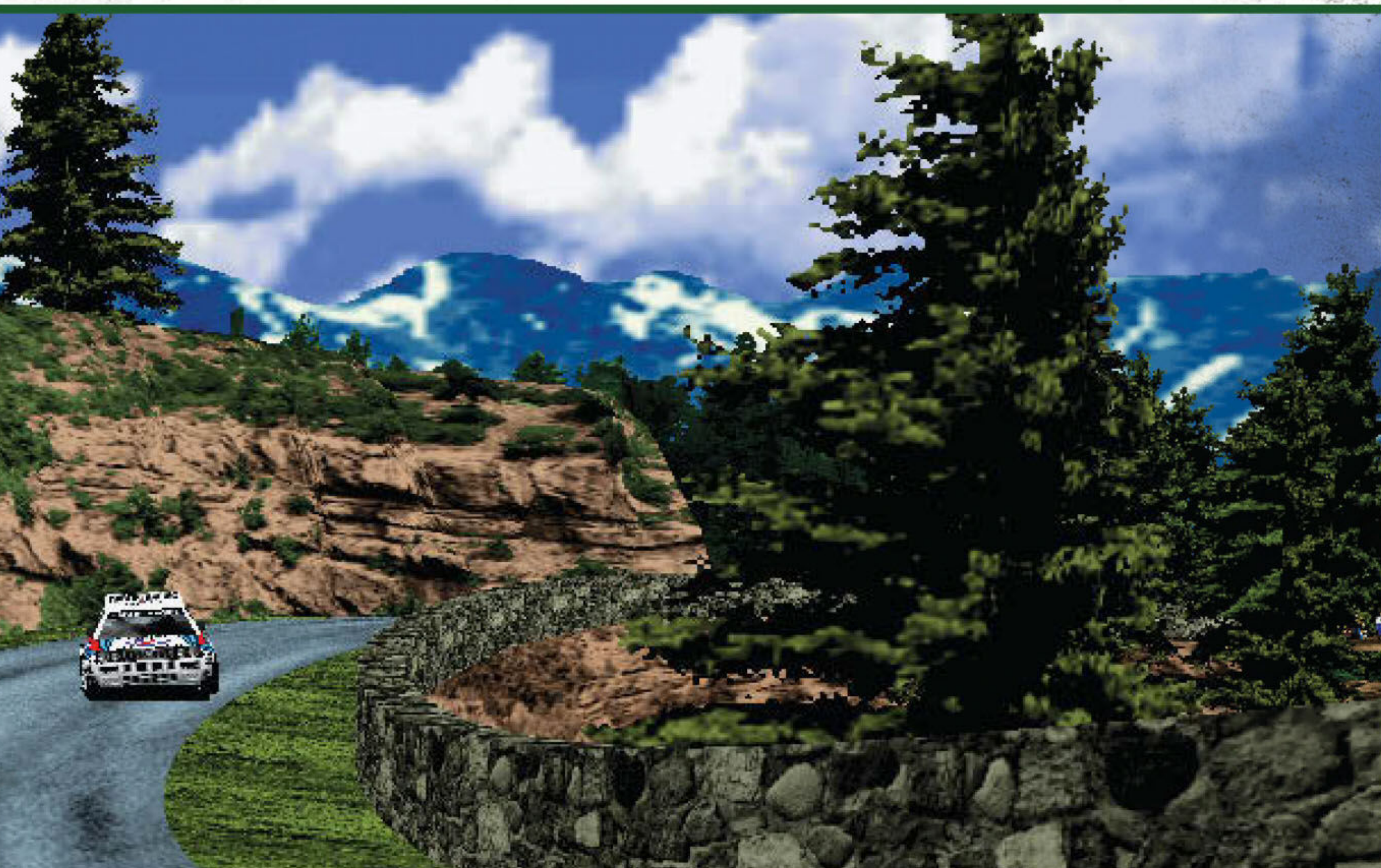
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THE HISTORY OF SEGA RALLY



SEGA RALLY 101

■ The *Sega Rally* series comprises arcade racing games featuring real cars from international rally competitions. Typically, each game's main mode features a multi-stage race over a variety of road surfaces from tarmac to mud. To claim victory, players must beat the clock as well as a field of fellow racers.



Whether you're tearing up the tarmac or kicking up mud, just about every rally game out today has been influenced by Sega's hit series. Nick Thorpe is your co-driver for this powerslide around memory lane…

If anything sums up arcade gaming, it's the old adage, 'Simple to learn, hard to master,' and *Sega Rally* might just be the perfect example of that. Anyone can have fun sliding around muddy tracks, but if you've met a *Sega Rally* player who doesn't feel that they could beat their best time, they're either boasting or joking. The *Sega Rally* series has inspired over 20 years of obsessive play, but its origins might well surprise you.

Sega's racing heritage was formidable by the early Nineties, thanks to the likes of *Hang-On*, *OutRun*, *Power Drift*, *Super Monaco GP*, *Virtua Racing* and *Daytona USA*, but it's notable that the key people involved in *Sega Rally Championship* weren't part of that legacy. Producer Tetsuya Mizuguchi had only an arcade simulator ride to his name, while director and chief graphic designer Kenji Sasaki was a fresh hire from Namco, where he'd shaped the look of *Ridge Racer*. The choice of rally racing was largely driven by Sasaki, with the intent that the off-road tracks and production cars would set the game apart from the tarmac and performance vehicles of its competition.

What was important was that *Sega Rally Championship*'s dirt roads didn't just look authentic – and for the time they did, thanks to a texture-gathering road trip in the USA and Mexico – they had to *feel* authentic too. Your vehicle's handling had to change as you moved from tarmac to gravel or mud, but while Toyota and Fiat had licensed their vehicles, they were less willing to provide the vital assistance that would allow the team to fine-tune the game's driving model. It wasn't until the car manufacturers actually saw the game in action that they provided the help required.

Unlike Mizuguchi and Sasaki, composer Takenobu Mitsuyoshi had previously worked on Sega's racing ▶

games, with *Virtua Racing*, *OutRunners* and *Daytona USA* to his credit. For *Sega Rally Championship* he delivered a rock-oriented soundtrack, with the vocal excesses of *Daytona USA* saved for the inventive game over theme. Such themes had been a hallmark of Mitsuyoshi's soundtracks, but *Sega Rally*'s "Game over, yeah!" has become iconic – just take a look on YouTube. Sound effects were handled by Tomoyuki Kawamura, and involved some creativity – the engine sound for the Lancia Delta actually came from Mizuguchi's car. Most memorably a voice actor provided pace notes as your co-driver, reading out the turns as you approached them, but they had to be accompanied by on-screen arrows due to the noise of the arcade environment.

22 PEOPLE

■ Size of the team behind the original arcade edition of *Sega Rally Championship*.

With the team creating something markedly different from previous driving games, there was a worry within the team, and particularly with Sasaki, that *Sega Rally Championship* might not have been a success. However, they needn't have worried as the game made an immediate impression on players. Former *Computer & Video Games* editor Paul Davies remembers his first encounter with the game vividly: "The basic sit-down coin-op was in the basement of Hamley's on Regent Street, newly installed. Like any new thing I felt intimidated by it, mainly because the attract demo showed the car flying around all over the place – jumping and really aggressive drifting."

Upon taking the plunge and playing the game, players realised the game's key strengths. "For the time it was so realistic, the physics and the sensation that you got from the force feedback was amazing," recalls Patrick Michael, head of R&D at Sega Amusements International. "You could feel the texture of the road surface and knew when you were about to slide out." Charles Blanchard, artist on the retro-inspired racer *Drift Stage*, agrees. "The physics in *Sega Rally* is a thing of beauty. Considering the year it was released, and how its contemporary competition played, it was leaps and bounds ahead of its time."

Like real rally racing, the challenge came largely from the courses themselves. "The circuits were relentlessly challenging – only the home straight gave you time to relax," recalls Paul. "Even though there were other cars on the same track, they were secondary to the time-trial aspect." Ant Lewis, senior designer on *Sega Rally Revo*, sums up exactly why the game became an outstanding arcade success: "It was the perfect example of incredible track design and superb car handling working in harmony to produce a thrilling experience."



» [Arcade] The curves of *Sega Rally*'s desert course are deceptively challenging for beginners.

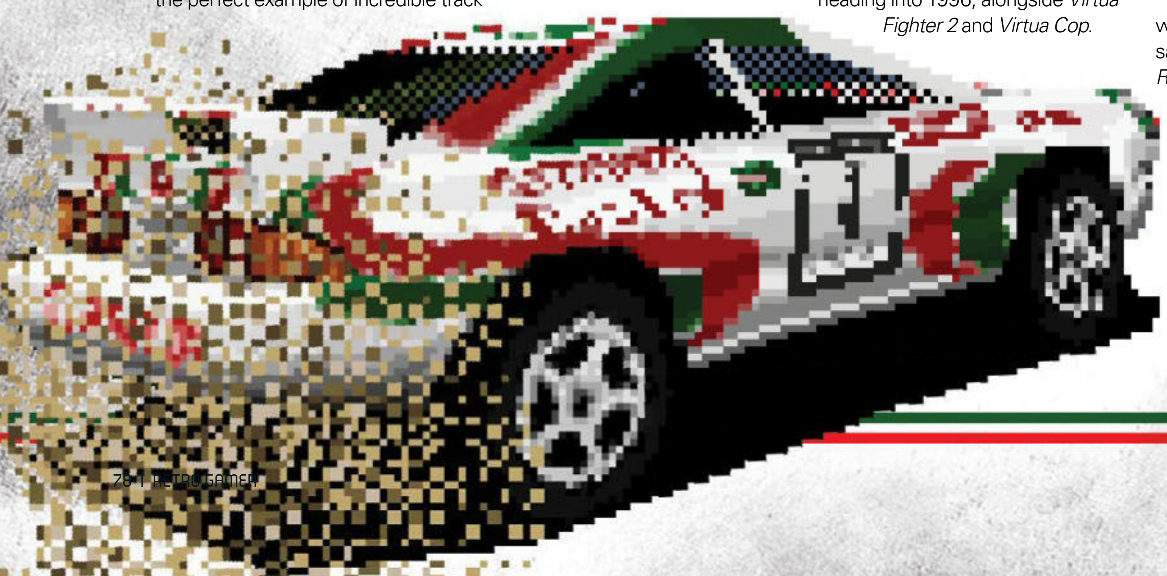
> **"Considering the year it was released, and how its contemporary competition played, it was leaps and bounds ahead of its time"**
> Charles Blanchard

Sega Rally Championship turned heads on home hardware too, as Sega's software team did a brilliant job of bringing the game to the Saturn, a notoriously challenging console for devs. While additions over the arcade were limited to some car tuning options, the secret Lancia Stratos car and an excellent arranged soundtrack, the gameplay came over intact. Sega wisely promoted the game as one of its major releases heading into 1996, alongside *Virtua Fighter 2* and *Virtua Cop*.

The Saturn version was received positively by players and critics alike. "We devoured it. A wheel was bought and there were fights over who would get to use it in multiplayer," Patrick tells us. "It handled so well, you didn't even question it," says Paul, who awarded the game 95% in his review for *C&VG*. "Sega's conversions around that time were magical. It looked like shit, but the feel was perfect. Same thing with *Virtua Fighter 2* at 60fps. You could play these games forever and not get bored."

While *Sega Rally* was an excellent conversion, it wasn't quite arcade perfect. "It was visually close," says Richard Tawn, lead environment artist on *Sega Rally Revo* and current art director at Sumo Digital. "But the feel on the pads was not the same as the arcade wheel, and that analogue control which was crucial to achieve the drift control." Likewise, Patrick still found himself drawn to the coin-op – "it was the lack of force feedback on the Saturn wheel that dragged us back to the arcade."

Despite the popularity of the game, fans would have to wait a few years for the arcade follow-up to *Sega Rally Championship* as the AM3 team was busy tackling other things. Following the completion of the popular racer







» [Saturn] Nailing hard corners like this kept home players occupied for ages.



» [PC] *Sega Rally 2* has a simpler desert course than the original, to help out new players.

10%

■ Margin by which *Sega Rally* dethroned the UK's previous fastest-selling CD game, *Destruction Derby.*

Manx TT Super Bike, Sega split the AM3 department into two teams. Many of the key developers behind *Sega Rally Championship* would go on to join the newly-formed AM Annex, including producer Tetsuya Mizuguchi, director and chief designer Kenji Sasaki, assistant director Isao Matsumoto, chief programmer Sohei Yamamoto and musician Tomoyuki Kawamura. AM Annex went on to release *Sega Touring Car Championship* in the autumn of 1996.

By this point Sega had developed the Model 3 arcade board, a powerful piece of technology that powered *Virtua Fighter 3*. After a few months of research in which the team learned to work with the new machine and attended World Rally Championship races, the team began work on *Sega Rally 2* in February 1997. AM Annex had found that the new hardware wasn't just capable of pushing more polygons, but that it had also added support for a variety of effects that would set the sequel apart from the original. The ability to create fog lent itself to a snow-covered course, something that had been intended for the original game. Likewise, the ability to use semi-transparent lighting allowed the team to create the series' first night time courses. Other ▶



» [Arcade] The narrow village streets of the mountain course are very tricky to successfully navigate.

PACE NOTES

Having made an appearance in every Sega Rally game except Sega Rally Revo, the 1995 Desert track is the track you need to know – so here's how to conquer it

EASY RIGHT/ EASY LEFT

■ You start this circuit on a gravel road, which gives you a good level of grip. Use a light touch on the steering wheel and follow the racing line for these gentle corners.



EASY RIGHT/OVER JUMP/EASY RIGHT

■ The track gets narrow and muddy here, so overtaking becomes difficult, especially thanks to the jumps. The straight exits nicely into a wide right turn.



LONG MEDIUM RIGHT /EASY RIGHT

■ This is the first point at which you'll need to let off the accelerator momentarily to initiate a slide. If you miss the apex of the turn, you may even need to hit the brakes.



OVER JUMP / EASY LEFT

■ Avoid the left side of the track here, as there's a water hazard coming up. Be sure to straighten your car before the first jump as you'll have no time to adjust for the second.



VERY LONG EASY RIGHT MAYBE

■ As you return to the gravel, you'll need to hit the brakes here to avoid sliding out. If you can keep your slide close to the wall on the right, you're doing pretty well.



EASY LEFT, EASY RIGHT

■ This S-bend is a common sticking point for new players. To maintain your speed, you'll need to enter from the right and hit the sweet spot between the walls.

"Praise generally focused on the game's additional content and thrills"



» [PC] Weather conditions and time of day were both major additions to *Sega Rally 2.*

details were also enhanced, including clouds of dust and spectators fleeing the track.

Unlike the first game, in which music was primarily composed by Takenobu Mitsuyoshi, Sega brought in a variety of external artists from the Prime Direction label for the soundtrack of *Sega Rally 2*. This gave the game a more dance/pop-oriented sound in keeping with the trends of the time. Other artists brought in include the late Kenji Eno of Warp and Sega's own Jun Senoue, who provided a guitar-based track for the game's opening course reminiscent of the style he'd employ in the *Sonic Adventure* games. Another addition to the team was rally driver Yoshio Fujimoto, whose supervisory visits helped to shape the game's handling and trackside details.

2:53.54

■ Winning time from *Sega Saturn Magazine*'s three-stage time attack competition.

***Sega Rally 2* made its arcade debut in February 1998, once again achieving widespread success. A home conversion of** *Sega Rally 2* became one of the key early Dreamcast games in 1999, but the console landscape had changed considerably in just a few years – a straight conversion was no longer enough to satisfy players. As a result new content was added to the game, including a large number of extra circuits and two extra locales as part of the new 10 Year Championship mode, which also featured a selection of new weather conditions including rain. A selection of classic cars featuring a variety of championship winning vehicles was also added.

MARQUE OF DISTINCTION

The Sega Rally series has used real licensed vehicles since its inception – here are the companies and vehicles involved

TOYOTA

■ Having won the Manufacturer's Championship in the 1993 and 1994 seasons of the World Rally Championship, Toyota was a natural inclusion in the original *Sega Rally* title and has appeared in every game in the series.

VEHICLES

Celica GT-Four ST205 (*Sega Rally, Sega Rally 2, Sega Rally GBA, Sega Rally 2006, Sega Rally Revo, Sega Rally 3, Sega Rally Online Arcade*)

Celica GT-Four ST185 (*Sega Rally 2*)

Corolla WRC (*Sega Rally 2, Sega Rally GBA*)

Celica VVTi (*Sega Rally Revo*)

LANCIA

■ With ten Manufacturer's Championships to its credit, Lancia is still the most successful brand in WRC history. The Lancia Delta was responsible for six consecutive wins from 1987-1992, making it an easy inclusion in *Sega Rally.*

VEHICLES

Delta HF Integrale Evoluzione (*Sega Rally, Sega Rally 2, Sega Rally GBA, Sega Rally 2006, Sega Rally Revo, Sega Rally 3, Sega Rally Online Arcade*)

Stratos HF (*Sega Rally, Sega Rally 2, Sega Rally GBA, Sega Rally 2006, Sega Rally Revo*)

Delta HF Integrale 16V (*Sega Rally 2*)

Rally 037 (*Sega Rally 2*)

ECV1 (*Sega Rally Revo*)

SUBARU

■ Subaru won the Manufacturer's Championship in 1995, 1996 and 1997 as well as powering Colin McRae to the Driver's Championship in 1995, Subaru's iconic Impreza series was an obvious addition to *Sega Rally 2.*

VEHICLES

Impreza WRC (*Sega Rally 2, Sega Rally GBA, Sega Rally 2006, Sega Rally 3*)

Impreza 555 (Sega Rally 2)

Impreza WRX STi (*Sega Rally 2006, Sega Rally Revo, Sega Rally Online Arcade*)

11

■ Exclusive cars were added to the home conversions of *Sega Rally 2.*

CITROËN

■ Despite only entering the World Rally Championship in 2001, Citroen picked up eight Manufacturer's Championships from 2003 to 2012 thanks to driver Sébastien Loeb, who won nine consecutive Driver's Championships for the team.

VEHICLES

Xsara 2.0i 16V VTS (*Sega Rally 2006*)

Xsara Rallycross (*Sega Rally 2006, Sega Rally Revo*, Sega *Rally Online Arcade*)

C2 Super 1600 (*Sega Rally Revo*)

C4 WRC08 (*Sega Rally 3*)

FORD

■ The Escort had seen both Manufacturer's Championship and Driver's Championship success in the late Seventies and early Eighties, while the Focus would win the Manufacturer's Championship in 2006 and 2007.

VEHICLES

Escort WRC (*Sega Rally 2, Sega Rally Revo*)

Focus RS (*Sega Rally GBA, Sega Rally 2006, Sega Rally Revo, Sega Rally 3, Sega Rally Online Arcade*)

Focus Air Force Reserve (*Sega Rally 2006*)

RS200E (*Sega Rally Revo*)

PEUGEOT

■ *Sega Rally 2* added Peugeot as it had seen success in the Eighties with the Peugeot 205. The 206 would win the Manufacturer's Championship in 2000, 2001 and 2002, and propel Marcus Grönholm to two Driver's Championships.

VEHICLES

306 Maxi (*Sega Rally 2*)

106 Maxi (*Sega Rally 2*)

205 Turbo 16 (*Sega Rally 2, Sega Rally Revo*)

206 WRC (*Sega Rally GBA, Sega Rally 2006, Sega Rally Revo*)

307 Sport (*Sega Rally 2006*)

206 RCC (*Sega Rally Revo*)

207 Super 2000 (*Sega Rally Revo, Sega Rally 3, Sega Rally Online Arcade*)

405 T16 Rally Road (*Sega Rally Revo*)

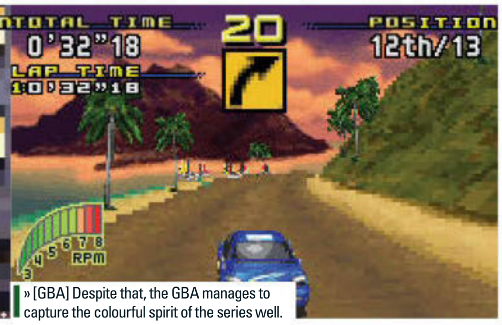
Critical reception for *Sega Rally 2* was once again positive, though not quite as strongly as before, with scores ranging from 91% in *Dreamcast Magazine* to 7/10 in *DC-UK*. Praise generally focused on the game's additional content and thrills. Complaints focused on the game's uneven frame-rate, which wobbled between 30 and 60 frames per second, and the poor PAL conversion – an egregious error given the PAL Dreamcast's capability to output 60Hz. As the Dreamcast version was built for the Windows CE operating system, a PC conversion was quickly released with the same features. The PC game manages a constant 60 frames per second on modern hardware, and is the preferred version today.

AM Annex was renamed Sega Rosso in 2000 and Sasaki assumed control of the studio, while Tetsuya Mizuguchi split away to form United Game Artists, where he created cult hits *Space Channel 5* and *Rez*. Sega Rosso's next release in the series was exclusive to handheld platforms. In 2002, a version of *Sega Rally* was produced for the Game Boy Advance. This was based on *Sega Rally 2*, with similar cars and settings but new track designs. Critical reception was average. While the game is enjoyable if a bit easy, the game's low-res 3D engine was widely criticised, especially in comparison to that of its competitor *V-Rally 3*.

There was also a version produced for the Nokia N-Gage, which functions as a modified version of the GBA game. It was originally thought to have been cancelled alongside Sega's N-Gage conversions of *Virtua Cop* and *Alien Front*, but the game actually did see release in Australia and is one of the rarest and most expensive games for the system. While the N-Gage game provides 3D scenery and cars at a higher resolution (albeit a lower frame-rate), it is a worse game in every other regard – even if the cars didn't twitch around wildly at even the merest hint of steering, the handling would still be atrocious.



» [GBA] The Game Boy Advance game was blighted by some horrendously blocky tracks.



» [GBA] Despite that, the GBA manages to capture the colourful spirit of the series well.

The next *Sega Rally* would also receive a limited release, as well as missing the 2005 launch date intended to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the original game. As well as including an arcade mode with a variety of courses to choose from, the PS2 game *Sega Rally* 2006 attempted to modernise the series with an in-depth career mode, featuring a shop in which you could buy new parts and modify your car to take part in a packed calendar of events.

There's nothing wrong with *Sega Rally 2006*, but it's almost a victim of the series' past success, as it fails to distinguish itself from other off-road racers. While it's a nice-looking game in its own right, *Sega Rally 2006* didn't really capture the *Sega Rally* spirit visually. The colours and fanciful trackside details of the original were replaced with a more realistic visuals, featuring somewhat bland environments and the muted colour palette that was starting to become all too common. Likewise, the soundtrack features the talents of almost every Sega composer of the era, but the electronic beats are even further away from the sound of the original than *Sega Rally 2*'s soundtrack. The biggest complaint is that trackside collisions don't feel right, with the car simply stopping dead on certain objects.

***Sega Rally 2006* launched to a lukewarm reception in Japan and South Korea in early 2006, receiving a mediocre 26/40 from** *Weekly Famitsu*, and never saw release outside of Asia. However, it ended up being a must-buy for fans of the original game thanks to its bonus disc – an arcade-perfect conversion of the original game, which managed to completely overshadow the main game.

At the same time as *Sega Rally 2006* was being developed, Sega was putting together a new team based in the UK specifically to racing games. Sega Racing Studio attracted a lot of developers, and particularly some from Codemasters, which ►

MITSUBISHI MOTORS

■ Tommi Mäkinen dominated the rally scene of the late Nineties in the Lancer Evolution series, winning the Driver's Championship in four seasons from 1996. Mitsubishi also won the Manufacturer's Championship in 1998.

VEHICLES

- **Lancer Evolution III** (*Sega Rally 2*)
- **Lancer Evolution IV** (*Sega Rally 2*)
- **Lancer Evolution V** (*Sega Rally 2*)
- **Lancer Evolution VII** (*Sega Rally GBA*)
- **Lancer Evolution VIII MR** (*Sega Rally 2006*)
- **Lancer Evolution IX** (*Sega Rally Revo, Sega Rally Online Arcade*)
- **Concept-X** (*Sega Rally Revo*)
- **Lancer Evolution X** (*SR3*)

AUDI

■ The only German manufacturer to win any of the WRC categories during *Sega Rally*'s lifetime was represented with its classic Eighties cars, which took Driver's and Manufacturer's championships twice each.

VEHICLES

- **Quattro A2** (*Sega Rally Revo*)
- **Sport Quattro S1 Pikes Peak** (*Sega Rally Revo*)

RENAULT

■ The first Manufacturer's Championship in 1973 was won in an Alpine-Renault A110, and the Maxi Mégane had proven successful in the British Rally Championship and European Rally Championship in the Nineties.

VEHICLES

- **Maxi Mégane** (*Sega Rally 2*)
- **Alpine-Renault A110** (*Sega Rally 2*)

FIAT

■ Fiat wasn't content to let its subsidiary Lancia dominate the rally scene and managed to win three Manufacturer's Championships with the Fiat 131 Abarth, with Markku Alén and Walter Röhrl winning Driver's Championships in it.

VEHICLES

- **131 Abarth** (*Sega Rally 2*)
- **Grande Punto Rally** (*Sega Rally Revo*)

ŠKODA

■ Skoda was regarded as the laughing stock of the automotive world, but by the Noughties the manufacturer had become a competitive force within the WRC thanks to the likes of Armin Schwarz and Jan Kopecký.

VEHICLES

- **Fabia** (*Sega Rally Revo, Sega Rally Online Arcade*)
- **Octavia Kit Car** (*Sega Rally Revo*)

VOLKSWAGEN

■ When *Sega Rally Revo* made its debut, Volkswagen was a future force in the rally world, but in recent times it has won three Manufacturer's Championships making the prolific team a likely contender if the *Sega Rally* series ever returns.

VEHICLES

- **Golf GTI** (*Sega Rally Revo*)

14

■ Tracks initially created for *Sega Rally 2* before the final cut to four.



▶ had been producing the *Colin McRae Rally* series since 1998. The studio's first production was to be a renewal of the *Sega Rally* concept for a new generation of consoles – the Xbox 360 and PS3, as well as PC. This project would come to be known as *Sega Rally* in Europe, but for the sake of clarity we're going to refer to it by its international name, *Sega Rally Revo*.

The key innovation that *Sega Rally Revo* brought to the series was the inclusion of track deformation – allowing players to carve a path through the mud, dirt and snow. "I think deformation felt like a natural step to Guy Wilday, the game director," recalls Richard. "When you are faced with a series like this you have to innovate, and at the time nothing in games used a machine's power to deform the tracks and change the game in real time the way deformation could." This provided a new challenge, as cars could gain extra grip and speed by following the paths carved out by other racers. However, not everyone was enamoured with the feature. "The game needed a USP," recalls Ant Lewis, senior designer on *Sega Rally Revo*. "But the amount of effort from a development perspective and the resources it required from the hardware distracted us from concentrating on other parts of the game."

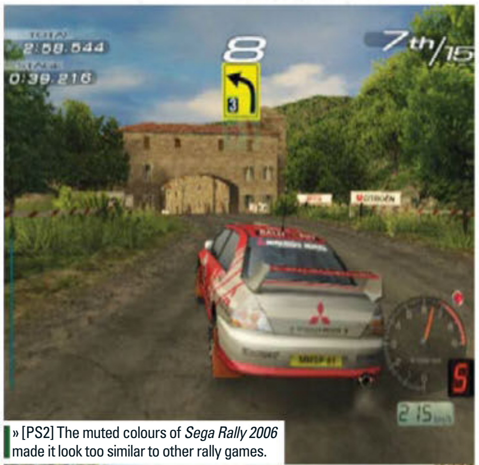
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■ Copies of *Sega Rally 2006* sold during its January 2006 launch window.

The concept of the game remained the same, but structure was changed to fit the demands of the market. This meant the inclusion of over 30 vehicles divided into a series of classes, 16 tracks across six locations and a substantial championship mode. Unlike the multi-stage races of previous games, each race in a championship was a distinct six-car race, with players earning points based on their finishing positions. Additionally, players could take part in six-player races online.

Sega Rally Revo launched in September 2007 and received a mixed-to-positive response from the press, with scores including 8/10 from *GamesTM* and 92% from *Play*. The visuals received praise and the track deformation was well received. Less positive reviews included a 65% rating from *Game Informer*, which complained about a lack of variety and depth. Sales evidently didn't live up to expectations, as Sega Racing Studio's closure was announced in April 2008, only to be overturned by a last-minute sale to Codemasters. However, that wasn't the end of the story, as the studio was actually still working on turning *Sega Rally Revo* into the arcade game *Sega Rally 3*.

"When we at Sega Amusements first heard that the newly formed Sega Racing Studio was looking at



» [PS2] The muted colours of *Sega Rally 2006* made it look too similar to other rally games.



» [PS2] Lakeside remains a tricky course on PS2, just like every other platform.

"When you are faced with a series like this you have to innovate, and at the time nothing used a machine's power to deform the tracks"

Richard Tawn

SUZUKI

■ The Japanese manufacturer made its World Rally Championship debut in 2007, testing for its first and only full season in 2008. The team struggled in early races, before finding better form later on in the season.

VEHICLES

SX4 WRC 08 (*Sega Rally 3*)

HUMMER

■ The name is synonymous with its off-road behemoths and the now-defunct General Motors-owned SUV brand made its debut as an unlockable extra vehicle in *Sega Rally Revo*, despite a lack of competitive rally heritage.

VEHICLES

H3 (*Sega Rally Revo*)

McRae Enduro Sport

■ This specialist manufacturer, named after Colin McRae, produces bespoke powerful vehicles for various off-road motorsports events. The company made its debut with a secret vehicle in *Sega Rally Revo*.

VEHICLES

McRae Enduro (*Sega Rally Revo*, *Sega Rally 3*, *Sega Rally Online Arcade*)

RUF

■ This German manufacturer makes cars based off of Porsche designs, with modifications that put their cars amongst the fastest production models in the world. The manufacurer debuted in *Sega Rally Revo*.

VEHICLES

Rt 12 (*Sega Rally Revo*)

BOWLER

■ This manufacturer of heavily modified Land Rover and Range Rover vehicles made its debut as a secret inclusion in *Sega Rally 3*. To unlock the Nemesis, hold the brake pedal down while selecting a vehicle in Quick Race mode!

VEHICLES

Nemesis (*Sega Rally 3*, *Sega Rally Online Arcade*)





» [PS2] It's in your interests to avoid barging opposing racers, as they're just obstacles in practice.



» [PSP] Bugbear's PSP conversion of *Sega Rally Revo* altered track layouts, but was otherwise very faithful.

3 YEARS

■ Lifespan of Sega Racing Studio, developer of *Sega Rally Revo* and *Sega Rally 3*.

DEBUG DEMOLITION

Patrick Michael on the testers' unofficial Sega Rally 3 game mode

Multiplayer competition is always fierce amongst testers, as countless hours of play have honed skills to perfection. "As a result of many hours of play the team discovered that if one of them drove the Desert track the right way to get the time extensions, the remaining players could race the track in reverse," Patrick recalls. "The topology of the track was such that the ability to launch your car into the air were far greater if you drive around backwards, so hours of fun were had crashing and smashing their way to the finish line whilst avoiding the single car racing towards them head on.

"The first time I knew anything about it was the roars of laughter and the shouts for a rematch. After playing it myself I knew it had to stay in," he explains. But what of poor players moving the wrong way? "As with all games you want to keep the player moving in the right direction but we took the decision to visually warn them, but not force them, so you can still enjoy this 'game' today."



a new version of *Rally* we went straight up to Solihull to see what was being planned," recalls Patrick. "We played a early build on PS3 hardware using force feedback wheels and knew that this was something that had to be brought to the arcade. After discussing their concept for the consumer game we outlined the basic requirements for an arcade title very quickly and worked with their talented team to draw up a more detailed game design document."

The most obvious change made to *Sega Rally 3* was the return to the multi-stage race format, but with an extra lap added to each track. However, Patrick requested a range of subtle changes were made to better suit the arcade environment. "The fantastic track deformation system, developed for the home game had to be rethought," he explains. "The road surfaces were pre-deformed as the limited number of laps per track did not allow players to see the changes in texture and grip. The AI was modified and rubber banding was fine-tuned not just to level the playing field but to ensure that it is all about close interaction."

A key part of *Sega Rally 3*'s appeal was the cabinet, featuring a force feedback wheel and moving seat. At a time when arcade games were of a low profile, the production was a surprisingly major project with bespoke cabinet design. "I wrote the interface to the motion platform and was amazed when technicians came over from Japan to show us how it all worked," explained Jamie Lowes, handling programmer on *Sega Rally Revo* and *Sega Rally 3*. "I assumed the machine would be a standard unit with an API to control it. Instead, everything was bespoke, and we ended up sending control codes directly to the stepper motors to move the seat around."

Sega Rally 3 made its debut a month after the closure of Sega Racing Studio in May 2008. "Toward the end most of the developers had left the studio for new positions leaving behind a core that worked on in a very difficult situation. Their dedication to the game was unquestionable," recalls Patrick. The arcade game ended up enjoying the success that *Sega Rally Revo* hadn't. "I remember good feedback at the time. But it's hard to compare to a console release, as there aren't so many outlets that review arcade games," says Jamie. As a dedicated member of arcade staff, Patrick has a better idea of how it did: "The operator reception was great. The game proved hugely successful in Europe and the Middle East."

Sega Rally 3 was ported to Xbox 360 and PS3 as *Sega Rally Online Arcade*, with Sumo Digital handling the porting duties. Beside the lower frame-rate and revised vehicle line-up, this is a great conversion, but it has been delisted from services due to the expiration of licensing agreements. *Sega Rally* has been dormant since then, and it remains to be seen whether Sega will revisit the series in the future. However, fans continue to look upon the series fondly.

"It's the best kind of timeless," says Charles. "The gameplay is fun and still holds up against modern racers, but you get the bonus of the amazing golden age of Sega sound design and artwork."

Ant's assessment is similar. "I think nostalgia is a contributing factor but to be honest, it's because the game played so well. Gameplay doesn't age!" We couldn't agree more. Game over, yeah! *

£15,000
■ The price of a *Sega Rally 3* deluxe motion cabinet at launch in 2008.

Special thanks to Steve Lycett and Patrick Michael for introductions.



» [PC] Tearing paths through the track was key to *Sega Rally Revo*'s unique appeal.


» [Xbox 360] Big jumps are a key part of any *Sega Rally* game, from the original to *Online Arcade*.


» [PC] Despite a strong rally heritage, Audi didn't debut in the series until 2007.



» [Xbox 360] Racers in *Sega Rally 3/Online Arcade* were less aggressive than their *Revo* counterparts.

CLASSIC MOMENTS

Moonstone: A Hard Days Knight

» **PLATFORM:** AMIGA » **DEVELOPER:** BULLFROG PRODUCTIONS
» **RELEASED:** 1993

One of the greatest things about *Moonstone* is just how epic the whole game feels. This in part is thanks to an incredibly moody soundtrack by the late Richard Joseph, but it's also down to the excellent animated opening that perfectly sets the tone. As the sombre score builds, cloaked druids make their way into Stonehenge. As they enter the holy site, the perspective moves overhead, only to cut to a bearded druid who summons lightning as his followers chant around him. A knight soon enters the sacred area and kneels so he can be anointed. It's a simple sequence, but an extremely powerful one that lingers in the memory for quite some time. *



BIO

There were plenty of one-on-one fighters available for the Amiga, but few were as epic, involved, or as downright gory as *Moonstone*. Created by Rob Anderson, *Moonstone* had you playing as a knight who must retrieve the fabled stones of the title, whilst fending off the advances of three rivals. While Mindscape's game was also released on the PC, it's the Amiga that many gamers associate it with and it proved that one-on-one fighters could have real depth to them.



MORE CLASSIC MOONSTONE MOMENTS

"I'm the map, I'm the map"



The Moonstone needed to gain access to Stonehenge isn't the easiest of items to find, meaning you'll need to use the huge overhead map. Each turn you can choose to visit one of the game's many locations in the hope of retrieving keys that will open the way to the stone. You must be wary though as three other knights are attempting the exact same thing…

"There can be only one!"



If *Barbarian* taught us one thing, it's that every gamer loves to decapitate their opponents. *Moonstone* was no different, allowing a quick and easy win if you were able to separate a knight's head from his shoulders. It lacked the showmanship of *Barbarian* (no goblin appears to pull of your defeated corpse) but remains just as effective.

Gambling time



Everyone needs to take a break from all that hacking and slashing and the knights of *Moonstone* are no different. Should you wish to it's possible to visit the many towns and cities found across the kingdom. Once there you can choose to upgrade your weapons and magical items, receive healing or visit the local tavern and take part in some rather dodgy gambling.

So much gore



Barbarian may be well known for its bloody combat, but *Moonstone* takes it to the next level. The sheer amount of carnage that you can unleash as a tooled up knight is quite awesome and battlefields can look a right bloody mess once you've finished dissecting your opponents. It's extremely satisfying, particularly when tackling multiple enemies.

PSYCHONAUTS

Tim Schafer doesn't really do sequels. But Psychonauts has been an ongoing exception, something he's wanted to revisit for seemingly forever. With Psychonauts 2 now a certainty, Tim Henderson takes a look back at how the first game came into the world



PSYCHONAUTS 101

■ *Psychonauts* is an adventure game and a platformer. Its hub world is large enough that it pushes towards the open-world genre, too. Mechanically, it's about jumping around the place, collecting things and using interesting powers. To progress, however, those powers will have be used creatively to solve puzzles, and bizarre characters must be interacted with. All in all, *Psychonauts* is pretty great.

It's 5:45AM. There's been no time to shower, the sun is still stuck behind the horizon, and Tim Schafer has decided to open our Skype discussion with a question of his own: "So, how does it hold up?"

"It's held up well." Playing back the recording, we can hear the sincerity of the comment, even through a stifled yawn. "*Very* well, actually."

We're not kidding. Hot off the heels of the sequel's announcement, revisiting the game on PC showed it to be tighter, somehow an improvement on a fond memory. If not for the pre-rendered story sequences, you could trick a child into thinking it's a new release.

"The cutscenes will never look better," Tim says with humour in his voice. "They're like a memory to remind you of when it came out."

Psychonauts is a known oddity of a game – difficult to describe, but beloved by many– a critical darling and a commercial flop. It's amazing that it got made and came out when it did, but it is also a product of its time. In many ways, it owes its very existence to the original vision for the then-new Xbox brand.

"We had just started out, and we were really, really lucky that the Xbox launched right then," Tim explains. "Ed Fries was running it and he had this thing about how games could be art. And I was, like, 'That sounds like what I want to do!'" Thus an unproven studio was given a shot at not only working on an original game, but also had a foot in a genre that Tim lacked experience with. "I work cheap," he half-jokes when asked how he sold the idea of an adventure-platformer revolving around exploring people's psyches. "A part of the pitch was that we wanted to make a platformer that was more than just a platformer. A game that had adventure game elements: puzzles, an inventory and more real characters than you usually get and a deeper story than you get in a platformer."

Few would argue that *Psychonauts* delivered on character and story, but in many ways it's still surprising just how well it did what it did. In an era where a demand for confused notions of maturity was rife, an era in which such charismatic games as *Jak & Daxter* and *Prince Of Persia: The Sands of Time* received sequels dripping with nu-metal grimness, *Psychonauts* managed to be *dark* in a more sincere way. "I actually really reacted against that gritty-moody trend," Tim says. "But it's true that in our game, well, I guess you're going into people's minds, which have a whole kind of spectrum of emotions in them, and these can be really happy. Or really sad.

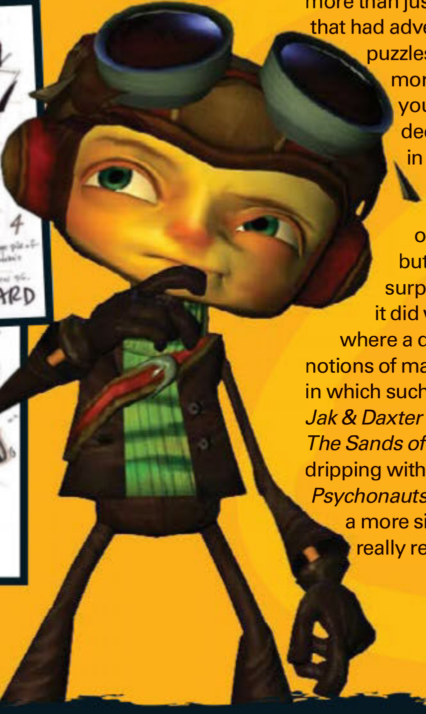
"As soon as we were going into people's brains, I wanted to have secrets. And people purposely build these kind of little packets – like owl pellets; how owls eat mice, but the small bones of the mice are going to cut them from the inside, so they wrap them in this soft, velvety thing so that they can digest them. And then the owl barfs it out. It's like you have this emotional pellet in your brain, which are these really painful memories that you just wrap in this soft, gauzy bed of lies and it sits like that in your brain so that you don't have to think about it anymore. In the game, you'd be cracking those open.

This may also be an expansion on *Psychonauts*' earliest origins as a dream sequence that never made it into *Full Throttle*. "Specifically," Tim clarifies, "I wanted Ben Throttle to take peyote and wander out into the desert and have a vision, and ▶







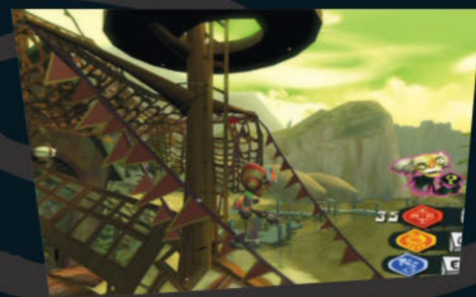


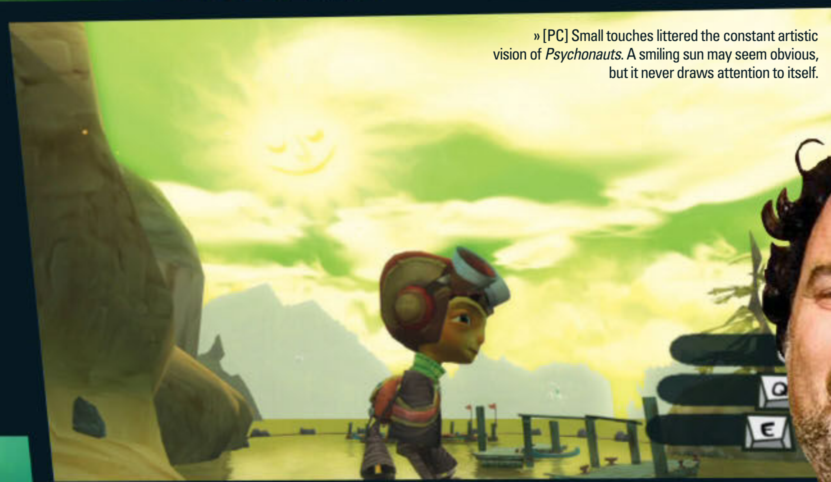




» [PC] Raz, learning levitation. This ability threatened to be game-breaking, but Tim insisted on keeping it in because it was just fun to use.

» [PC] Raz may not cope well with being in water, but tightrope walking over it provides few issues.





» [PC] Small touches littered the constant artistic vision of *Psychonauts*. A smiling sun may seem obvious, but it never draws attention to itself.

FORCING PUZZLES IN

There are some things that become clearer in hindsight and Double Fine was right about what would make *Psychonauts* great, and the market research was wrong. "The testing came back from Microsoft and they were, 'Well, they liked it but they, um… there was a problem with those puzzles, the adventure game parts.' And we asked why and if people couldn't get through it, and they were, 'No, they got through it, but there was a period where they were confused about what to do. And then they figured it out.' And I was thinking that that's what an adventure game *is*. But that was the beginning of this trend where some higher-up at Microsoft was critiquing our game once and they were like, 'You know, Tim, there are winners and there are losers out there. And you should make a game for the losers because there's a lot more of them.'"

> **"You're going into people's minds, which have a whole kind of spectrum of emotions in them"**
>
> Tim Schafer



» [PC] Ah, the lungfish. One of the sweeter, but also kind of disgusting, moments from Raz's adventure.



» Tim and Double Fine have found new success via crowfunding models, such as Fig and Kickstarter.

THE MAGIC OF PSYCHONAUTS








MMM, BACON

■ It's become common for adventures to offer players clues on how to progress to keep them in the game and away from Gamefaqs, but *Psychonauts* did this before other titles started to catch on. And it did it with a piece of bacon that you could use to phone home to your super-secret headquarters.

CAMERA CONTROL

■ A lot of adventure games these days utilise 3D. *Psychonauts* doesn't, and the result is a kind of immersive sense of exploration that isn't usually associated with puzzle-solving more sophisticated than reflecting beams of sunlight with oversized mirrors.

CHARACTERS

■ Raz is awesome. He feels real, he has flaws and phobias, and the fact that he's the PC – so often bland and pure, even in more story-focused games – is kind of astounding. The rest of the cast is great, too. We suppose they have to be, what with the game's worlds taking place within a few of their heads.

THE WORLD

■ Did we just mention the world of *Psychonauts*? Even within the canon of Schafer's work, which always excels at consistent world-building logic, *Psychonauts* is special. The very core of its fiction revolves around travelling into people's psyches, which itself is a canvas that is limited only by the artist's imagination.

THE MILKMAN

■ It may be true that the difficulty curve in *Psychonauts* is shaped like the polygraph test of a very bad liar, but it also has the Milkman stage, which is perfect. The mix of comedy, trippy visual design, and creative puzzles made this the kind of experience that other games simply can't pull off.

IT TOTALLY FUNCTIONS AS A PLATFORMER

■ Tim refers to *Psychonauts* as a platformer, and it's easy to see why it was sold as one. *Psychonauts* feels great to play, and is enjoyable when just goofing around. Messing around for a puzzle solution here is a lot more fun than clicking through an inventory.



IN THE KNOW

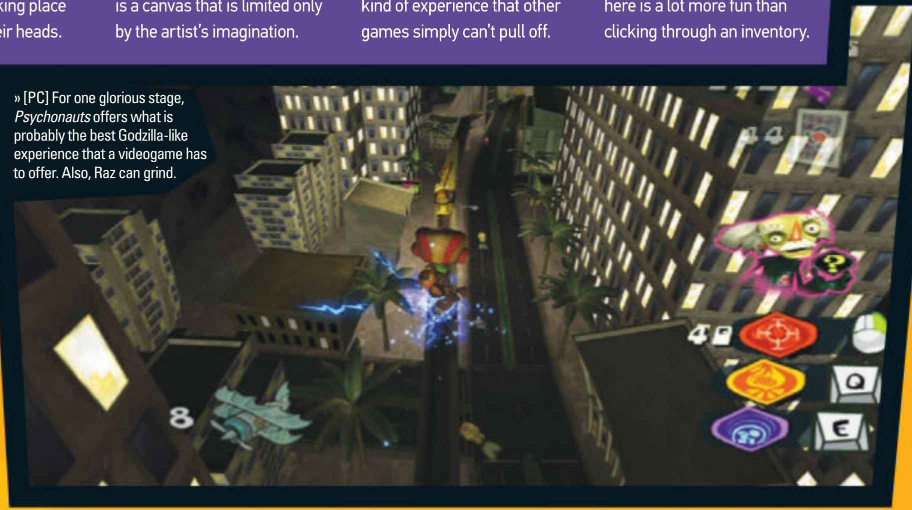
» **PUBLISHER:** Majesco/ Double Fine Productions
» **DEVELOPER:** Double Fine Productions
» **RELEASED:** 2005
» **PLATFORM:** Adventure/ Platformer
» **PLATFORM:** Xbox, PS2, PC

that somehow in this vision there would be this secret knowledge he had in his brain but couldn't access." Not surprisingly, the idea didn't sit well with the Lucasfilm, and so it remained shelved until Tim started his own company.

Tim wanted to make the kind of platformer that a person like him would make. He has spoken about discovering console games and the joys of direct character control back when the PlayStation and N64 were relevant – notably in relation to the tank controls found in *Grim Fandango* –, but late exposure to platformers and JRPGs meant that he wasn't indoctrinated into taking genre conventions for granted. "I remember playing *Donkey Kong 64* and thinking, 'I wish there was more of a reason to collect all of these bananas," he says. "There are hundreds to collect and I… I wonder why I want the bananas?" There is scarcely a beat before he finishes his sentence. "I guess I'm a monkey, so I'm answering my own question." One has to wonder if Mario's true objective is to fill a Scrooge McDuck-style money bin…

Psychonauts came from a different development background. "We didn't have the experience," Tim says. "But, well; that's one of my *things* about the industry. Once you've made a certain game – if you've made an RPG, for example, then there's this idea that, 'Oh, these guys, they've got the DNA to make RPGs!' But it's actually like, 'Well, no – people didn't know how, but then they tried it and figured it out and they made it.' There's not this DNA… people just stay with what they know. Those people at some point had to do it for the first time." He ends there, saying nothing of how a studio flitting between genres can be good for creativity. But *Psychonauts'* world does the talking for him.

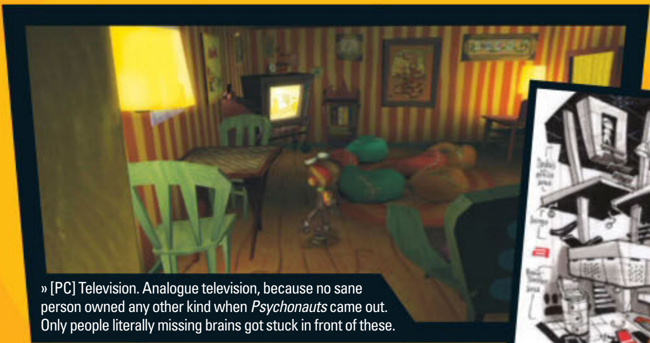




» [PC] For one glorious stage, *Psychonauts* offers what is probably the best Godzilla-like experience that a videogame has to offer. Also, Raz can grind.

While the game's summer camp setting is littered with collectables and challenges, they work as a part of the world that is more thoroughly thought-out and cohesive than is typically the genre's norm. *Donkey Kong*'s levels are littered with bananas because the characters are monkeys; what players pick up, unlock and collect in *Psychonauts* runs far deeper. "I never liked those explanations of why you're doing something being because it's a game," Schafer adds. "I don't want to break you out of the world. I want everything to be able to support the world that we're asking you to stay in. The collectables – or the things that happen – in the mental worlds, a lot of that is from, well – they just kind of come to you. You're in a mental world, so what does that mean? Well, you can have skeletons in the closet or roadblocks and all these kind of things from phrases about what goes on in your mind. So, we had the vault and emotional baggage, and these things just kind of present themselves to you once you accept this weird world where you're going into someone's brain."

Almost everything in *Psychonauts* seems to fit, often hilariously. Pieces of overly-emotional baggage and their missing tags take the place of

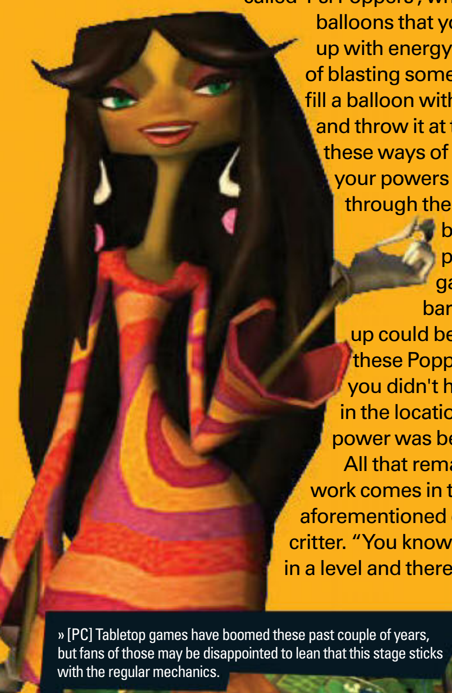


» [PC] Television. Analogue television, because no sane person owned any other kind when *Psychonauts* came out. Only people literally missing brains got stuck in front of these.



chests and keys. Only the bizarre little critter that allows players to teleport around each mental world seems to be without function. To explain why, however, a detour must be taken in which *Psychonauts* briefly drew inspiration from a JRPG.

"There was this game, *Skies Of Arcadia*, which had a lot of powers when you were in battle," Tim tells us. "You'd have these spells and they were these one-off spells, but you could also get a box and then you could just generate a million of these spells. For a while we had our psi powers, but we had these things called 'Psi Poppers', which were like balloons that you could fill up with energy. So instead of blasting somebody, you'd fill a balloon with Psi Blast and throw it at them. We had these ways of deploying your powers passively through these and it broke every puzzle in the game. Every barricade we put up could be diffused with these Poppers, because you didn't have to be in the location while the power was being done."



All that remains of this work comes in the form of the aforementioned checkpoint critter. "You know when you're in a level and there are points where you can teleport? There's this guy – we called him Oatmeal – who blows these balloons. Those were the Poppers. We cut the feature, but we liked that character, so we left him in."

When it came to powers, Oatmeal was just one of many lessons learned during *Psychonauts*' five-year development cycle. "I feel like it's like a two, maybe two-and-a-half year game," Schafer says. "We didn't know what we were doing. We were a bunch of adventure game people making a platformer." And while that did lead to new ideas, it also explained how developers can get pigeon-holed. "The controls took a lot of time, because there's no one solution to motion controls; there's a zillion different things. If you have an animation for running, how many frames does it take to blend into the animation and how far does the character move during that blend and at what frame is it interruptible? The game just didn't *feel* right, and it was bugging us. We had lovely environments, but the character didn't feel right, so we started the 'Raz Action Status' meetings. These would have me and one animator, one programmer and one level designer and we would just look at every single one of Raz's motions."

This explains why Raz has a crippling fear of water that is woven into his backstory – "We were like, 'How about we just don't do swimming?'" – but it was just one of the hurdles that came with being a new studio working on a new property in a new environment. "It was our first time navigating a publisher relationship. I had worked *at* a publisher and we could do whatever we wanted; as long as management was happy we just kept going and did our own thing."

Initially starting life as an exclusive for the Xbox, support was dropped and the staff at Double Fine found itself having to put time and effort into simply existing as a company. With a legacy now cemented, it's strange to hear Tim conclude with talk about lugging a demo of the game around E3, as one point almost blowing the kit thanks to an Australian power outlet. *Psychonauts* is a wonderful, bizarre, game that had to struggle for the right to exist. Mercifully, its sequel is set to traverse an easier path. ✱



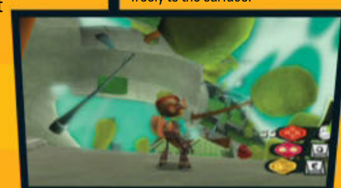
DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

BRÜTAL LEGEND
SYSTEM: Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, PC
YEAR: 2009

STACKING
SYSTEM: Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, PC
YEAR: 2011

BROKEN AGE
SYSTEM: Various
YEAR: 2014-15

» [PC] *Psychonauts* lets its darker undercurrent bubble more freely to the surface.



» [PC] Tabletop games have boomed these past couple of years, but fans of those may be disappointed to lean that this stage sticks with the regular mechanics.



A SEQUEL? A SEQUEL!

A few years ago, in an enthusiastic response to Tim Schafer's open interest in developing a sequel to his psychic summer-camp adventure, *Minecraft* creator Markus 'Notch' Persson suggested he could maybe provide financial aid in making the sequel a reality.

Double Fine would go on to say that this came at a strange time for the company, as this all happened in the lead-up to *Broken Age*'s then-unknown Kickstarter. Since then, even though a person flush with *Minecraft* wealth has balked at the cost of a *Psychonauts* sequel, Double Fine has gone from crowdfunding-strength to crowdfunding-strength, and *Psychonauts 2* became an eventual reality, officially announced at the 2015 Game Awards in December.

Outside of its existence and funding method (Fig – an alternate type of crowdfunding that allows people to properly invest in the project and see returns if they pony up at least $500), specific details of *Psychonauts 2* are still sparse. The debut trailer kicks off in a war room and a hostage infiltrate and rescue mission that grows increasingly ludicrous until the commander relents and decided that the Psychonauts must be called in.

What follows is a shot of some familiar characters in a sequence that suggests that Raz is returning, but maybe not as the only player-character this time around. It ends with the Fig logo, through which Double Fine hopes, through a mix of investors and public fans, to end up in a similar ballpark to the original game's $13 million budget.



Future Classic

Modern games you'll still be playing in years to come





- **» Featured System:** Xbox 360
- **» Year:** 2010
- **» Publisher:** Konami
- **» Developer:** MercurySteam
- **» Key People:** Hideo Kojima (producer), Dave Cox (producer), Robert Carlyle (voice actor)

GO DEEPER

- **» *Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow* is the best-selling game in the series. By November 2010 it had shipped a million units.**
- **» Gerard Butler was to voice Gabriel originally, but wasn't available so voice acting duties went to fellow Scot, Robert Carlyle**



»[Xbox One] Fear not fans, classic enemies like skeletons can still be found in *Lords Of Shadow*.

53. CASTLEVANIA: LORDS OF SHADOW

Before Lords Of Shadow, 3D Castlevania games were often considered to be a bad joke. A brief collaboration with Hideo Kojima changed all that, delivering a game that did the series proud

THE BACKGROUND

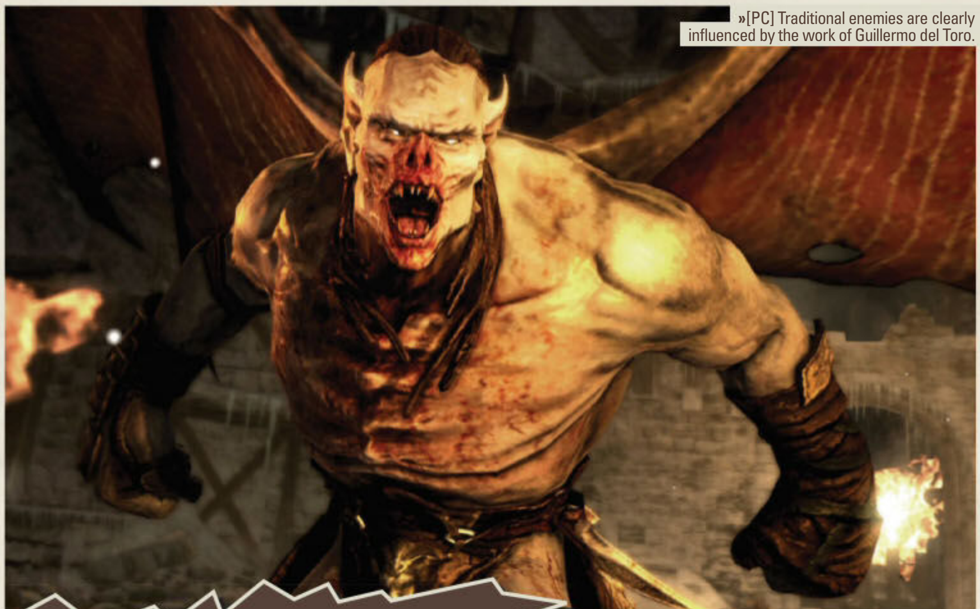
When Konami first unveiled *Lords Of Shadow* to the gaming press in August 2008 there was no indication that it was to be a new *Castlevania* game. It certainly drew comparisons to the series, mainly due to the gothic style and the chain-like whip of the lead character, but it wasn't until June 2009 that it was finally revealed as a reboot of one of Konami's longest running franchises with involvement from none other than Hideo Kojima.

Lords Of Shadow's early development was troubled to say the least. It was originally developed as a new IP for Konami, but when MercurySteam was still working on its prototype Konami got cold feet and wanted to scrap the still in-development title. It wasn't until producer David Cox took a video to Konami's Japanese headquarters, showing off MercurySteam's game engine that the publisher agreed for work on the project to continue. Interestingly, two other *Castlevania* prototypes were also being developed, one by famed *Castlevania* director Koji Igarashi, the other by a currently unnamed developer.

Lords Of Shadow gained even more traction once Hideo Kojima and Kojima Productions became involved, and MercurySteam forged on ahead with development. Originally, *Lords Of Shadow* was intended to be a 3D remake of the original game, but it was soon decided that a reboot would make more sense, and the game definitely benefits from this decision.

THE GAME

Many claim that *Lords Of Shadow* is a great game, but it isn't really a *Castlevania* game – these people are idiots, who clearly think *Castlevania* started with *Symphony Of The Night*. David has constantly mentioned that both *Castlevania* and *Super Castlevania IV* inspired the creation of *Lords Of Shadow* and their inspiration is easy to see, from the limited linearity of the stages, to the prolific boss encounters and classic locations that range from clock towers to *Frankenstein*-esque laboratories. Like early *Castlevania* games, the quest of protagonist Gabriel Belmont (played by Robert Carlyle) culminates in a journey to Dracula's castle, but it ends with a genius twist that still divides some fans to this day.


»[PC] Traditional enemies are clearly influenced by the work of Guillermo del Toro.


»[Xbox 360] Your Combat Cross is highly useful, allowing you access to numerous new areas.


»[Xbox 360] Fallen members of your brotherhood appear throughout the game. Loot them to receive clues and power-ups.

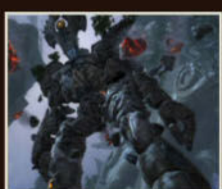
Things of note

HEAVYWEIGHT CASTING



Lords Of Shadow's cast is impressive. It features Robert Carlyle, Natascha McElhone, Patrick Stewart and Jason Isaacs as Satan.

EPIC BOSSES



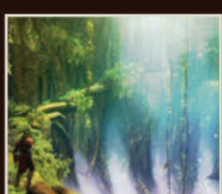
The boss fights in *Lords Of Shadow* are exceptionally good, with the Lords themselves being some of the most dramatic. The Titan fights are dull, though.

MISADVENTURES IN DLC



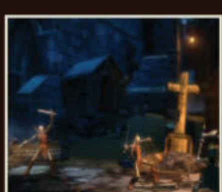
After the success of the game, two pieces of DLC were released, *Reverie* and *Resurrection*. David admits they were a mistake.

PC MASTER RACE



PC owners received an Ultimate Edition in 2013. In addition to running at 1080p and 60fps, it also includes all the DLC. In short we consider it to be the definitive version.

SEQUEL CITY



Lords Of Shadow's success led to two sequels including the bitterly disappointing *Lords Of Shadow 2* where you play as the powerful Dracula.

"It's an incredibly polished adventure that never forgets its 8-bit roots"

Conventional weapons like knives and Holy Water still feature and the whip returns in the form of the Combat Cross, a powerful item that can be constantly upgraded as the game progresses. In addition to unlocking new combat moves, the Cross (and other items Gabriel picks up) can be used to unlock previously inaccessible areas of the game world, giving the player a good excuse to return to previous levels, of which there are 50 to navigate. In addition to combat, Gabriel's useful Combat Cross is also used to scale walls, traverse gaps and rappel, allowing him to easily access remoter areas of the hauntingly beautiful environments.

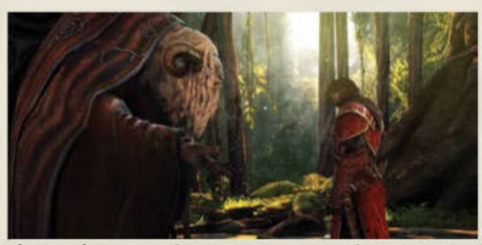
Enemy-wise, *Lords Of Shadow* is a mixture of old and new, featuring familiars creatures like vampires, wolves and werewolves, but also adding new monsters like goblins. It works well, making *Lords Of Shadow* feel familiar to fans while giving them new encounters to look forward to as the game progresses. And there are plenty of monsters in *Lords Of Shadow*, with the game staying true to its roots and giving you an endless supply of enemies to slay. There's a reliance on QTEs, particularly in the many boss encounters, that some will find annoying, but dramatically they work brilliantly, enhancing the already excellent atmosphere that's driven by Zobeck's narrative (Patrick Stewart) and Gabriel's doomed quest for redemption.

While most monsters can be brutally dispatched upon being stunned, certain ones can be turned into useful mounts at various points of the game. The brute strength of trolls can be used to batter gates, worgs can jump impassable areas, while spiders can create silk bridges and pull down certain objects. Throw in a lot of traditional fetch puzzles and a solid light/dark magic system and *Lords Of Shadow* has plenty to keep you busy as you play through its surprisingly lengthy campaign.

WHY IT'S A FUTURE CLASSIC

Lords Of Shadow has everything you want from a successful reboot. It makes excellent use of new technology and uses it to deliver new experiences that weren't possible in previous iterations of the franchise. It also attempts to broaden the fanbase of the original game, by utilising popular mechanics of the time while ensuring that there are enough familiar themes and tropes to ensure that the loyal fans aren't alienated. *Lords Of Shadow*'s ride to release may have been bumpy, but it proves just what's possible when a team with a vision sticks to its guns and doesn't take no for an answer. *Lords Of Shadow* might not be the most original of games (it borrows gameplay mechanics from many popular triple-A games of the time) but it's an incredibly polished adventure that never forgets its 8-bit roots. And if you need further proof of how special MercurySteam's game is, just look at how easily it messed up its winning formulae when creating its 2014 follow-up *Lords Of Shadow 2*. ★


»[Xbox 360] There are plenty of gory moments in *Lords Of Shadow*, more so in the latter half of the game.


»[Xbox 360] The story is *Castlevania*'s best and sees Gabriel attempting to retrieve the God Mask so he can resurrect his dead wife.



FIRST JOB
Software engineer at DMA Design

CURRENT JOB
Head of engineering at YoYo Games

FAVOURITE FILM
Singin' in the Rain

FAVOURITE ALBUM
A compilation of SID tunes

FAVOURITE BOOK:
Magician by Raymond E. Feist

FIRST COMPUTER/CONSOLE
ZX81

FAVOURITE COMPUTER/CONSOLE
SNES

BEST GAMING ACHIEVEMENT
The passion we put into *Lemmings*!

BEST-SELLING PRODUCT:
Lemmings

BEST HOLIDAY
We go to Orlando loads, we're all big Disney fans in my family.

WHO YOU WANT TO BE STRANDED WITH
My wife doesn't read this so I don't have to say her! I'll go for Dara O'Briain.

177835-467488268306522

SEX
M

NAME
Mike Dailly

DATE OF BIRTH
May 1970

PLACE OF BIRTH
Dundee, Scotland

BIOGRAPHY
Mike has been making games for almost 30 years and worked on the original *Lemmings* and *Grand Theft Auto*. He has also produced emulators for many old machines, including his beloved Commodore Plus/4.

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"Anyone could get a Spectrum in Dundee, though they'd usually fallen off the back of a lorry"

Mike Dailly

Mike Dailly

What cherished games would you take to the island?

As co-founder of the hugely influential developer DMA Design, Mike Dailly was a key player in the early days of the Scottish software industry. He tells Paul Drury all about carjacking and suicidal rodents

Being a teenager in Scottish city of Dundee in the Eighties could be tough. There was the particularly harsh weather and terrible goal-keeping to contend with, for starters, but thankfully it did have one gigantic advantage.

"The Spectrum was made in a factory in Dundee," says Mike Dailly, who hails from the city, "a huge number of people had one. Anyone could get one, though they'd usually fallen off the back of a lorry…"

Thankfully, the Spectrum's rubber keys meant the machine bounced safely into the bedroom of many an eager young Scot, though Mike actually began his computer odyssey with its sleek black predecessor, the ZX81. He acquired it aged 13 from a friend and was soon typing in magazine listings and tinkering in BASIC. An epiphany came when a game listing for *Snake* appeared in the Summer 1984 edition of *Personal Software*. It included a daunting Hex dump of incomprehensible numbers accompanied with the equivalent commands in Assembly language, allowing young Mike to actually understand what was going on. "Suddenly I could correlate these magic numbers with a language, it was possible to understand," he beams. "You could start to put things together, like calling a routine to make the border flash… and it was so fast! Ah, it was super cool."

Mike also used a Spectrum for a while, bought by his mum so he could write a database package for her workplace, an impressive achievement for a 14-year-old. It was enough to convince Miss Dailly her lad deserved a Commodore Plus/4, suitably tempted by the sub-hundred pound price tag, and soon he was lugging his machine and portable television to a computer club at nearby Kingsway Technical College, eager to develop his coding skills.

His first completed game was *Freek Out*, a *Breakout* homage, which he proudly sent to Cascade which demanded that major changes had to be made before publishing it. Instead, he bought a Commodore 64 cheap from a friend in the later months of 1987 and started writing games for the more popular micro, as well as enrolling onto a programming course at college the following year. Not unusually for the time, he soon discovered he knew a lot more about coding than his lecturers so he stopped attending and was unceremoniously booted off the course after the first term.

Fortunately, a fellow old boy of the Kingsway Tech computer club named David Jones was in the process of setting up a software development studio and offered Mike a job. His first projects were conversions of 16-bit titles *Ballistix* and *Blood Money* to the C64, beginning in his bedroom before moving into the new DMA office in August 1989.

So was the experience of trying to cram an Amiga and Atari ST game into a humble 8-bit machine character building or soul-destroying, we wonder? "It wasn't that bad," shrugs Mike. "I got *Ballistix* done with six bytes left! If you run out of space, you go back and find it somewhere. And with *Blood Money*, that was a multi-load, but basically, you never said anything was impossible."

This non-defeatist attitude would serve Mike well through the following decades in games development and soon his coding chops would be brought to the attention of a far wider game-playing audience. Scott Johnston had been brought into DMA to work on the graphics for Amiga title *Walker* (as documented in RG 149) and Mike took issue with the size of the soldiers he was creating for the game. He thought they should be smaller and used a spare Amiga to try and prove his point. "It took a few lunchtimes but I made a demo of these little animated men getting killed in funny ways and showed them to everyone," he tells us. "Russell [Kay] looked over my shoulder and said, 'There's a game in that!'"

Eventually, those little infantry men would morph into green-haired rodents and become the iconic *Lemmings* though as Mike notes, the game would have "many difficult births". The initial demo was produced by Russell Kay on a PC

Trivia

A statue commemorating the world-conquering game *Lemmings* was erected in Dundee in 2013 and thankfully no-one has clicked on the 'nuke' option yet.



[Amiga] Hired Guns was another example of DMA's willingness to innovate.





» [C64] Mike honed his coding skills by squeezing 16-bit hits, such as *Blood Money*, onto the C64.

Praise for Mike

Here's what **Retro Gamer** has to say about Mike Dailly's games...





Darran Jones
I can still remember dropping £45 on an import version of *Lemmings* on the SNES and not regretting it for a second. A truly amazing puzzle game that features a high number of excellent ports, so all system owners were happy. I remember enjoying Mike's PC Engine port of *Shadow Of The Beast* too.





Paul Drury
A pioneer of the industry, Mike provided much of the technical nous and concepts behind such prolific titles as *Lemmings* and *GTA*, quite an achievement for someone who started out on the Plus/4. It was great to discover he hasn't forgotten his 8-bit roots with his wonderful work on emulators, too.



» [Amiga] The end screen from the original *Lemmings* featured the team behind its creation – Mike's holding the 'L'

but his university course proved a distraction, as did his work on *Ballistix*. Mike then took up the baton and took *Lemmings* to the C64, where he got a single lemming jauntily strolling on screen before being moved to work on *Shadow Of The Beast* for the PC Engine. David Jones had the next crack at the concept after struggling to get the game *Walker* moving in the right direction and together with Gary Timmons, worked out some of the basic building blocks of the game. "Dave made an amazing editor," explains Mike, "which gave us freedom to create levels. Myself, Scott Johnston, Steve Hammond, Gary and Dave himself started to churn levels out. They made the backbone of the game. We also became really good at solving levels – someone would create a really hard level and within seconds someone would solve it! We became expert players and our levels were really hard…"

Thankfully, these tough screens populated the Taxing and Mayhem difficulty settings and Gary toned down the challenge to introduce new players gently into the joys of lemming liberation. Mike also contributed to the Amiga's two-player mode, inspired by competitive games of *Populous* in the DMA office, and though the team clearly found *Lemmings* great fun, they never expected the huge success of the title. "Until any game goes out and you get the reaction, you've no idea," he chuckles. "With *Lemmings*, there is something very funny about killing all these tiny, cute characters in a variety of ways. And the puzzle element was infuriating! The fact you could complete levels in so many different ways was really unique for the time."

As the Nineties progressed, Mike worked on several titles for the PC Engine, relishing the opportunity to work on a console, albeit one less popular in Europe than in its Japanese home. The machine's architecture was based around the 6502 CPU he was familiar with from his C64 development days but now he had many more sprites to play with and a much faster processor. "It was a beautiful machine to write for," beams Mike, "and one day I will go back and do retro stuff for it. Every UK developer wanted to get into making games for consoles and this was a real opportunity for us, although porting *Shadow Of The Beast* was a nightmare. It took me almost two years…"

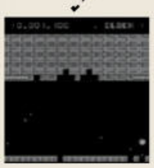
Mike also worked on the PC Engine port of *Ballistix* as well as various development tools for the console. The huge success of *Lemmings* had really put DMA on the map and the company became something of a tech hub, a valued partner for other developers to collaborate with and Mike produced many coding tools, from PC level editors to a Midi convertor for the Super Nintendo. "We loved the technology and back in the old days, you didn't make a game because it had been designed, a game evolved because you'd got this new bit of tech you wanted to showcase. You wrote, say, a new scrolling routine for the Spectrum and you'd make a game around that."

Mike's expert tool-making helped create such distinctive and original titles as *Hired Guns* (see RG138 for a full Making Of article), *Tanktics* and *Uniracers*, an innovative spin on single-wheeled, head-to-head racing. Yet despite DMA's desire to be original, a certain movie giant decided otherwise. "Pixar decided to sue us over *Uniracers*," sighs Mike. "They

Timeline

1987

FREEK OUT
■ **YEAR:** 1987
■ **FORMAT:** Plus/4
Mike's first game was this solid *Breakout* clone with a few added bells and whistles. Whilst it didn't get an official release, you can find it on Plus/4 World.



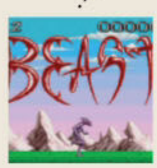
1989

BALLISTIX
■ **YEAR:** 1989
■ **FORMAT:** C64
Mike began his coding career at DMA with this conversion of the ricocheting 16-bit title inspired by old tabletop game, *Crossfire*.



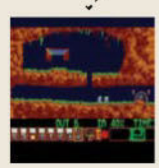
1989

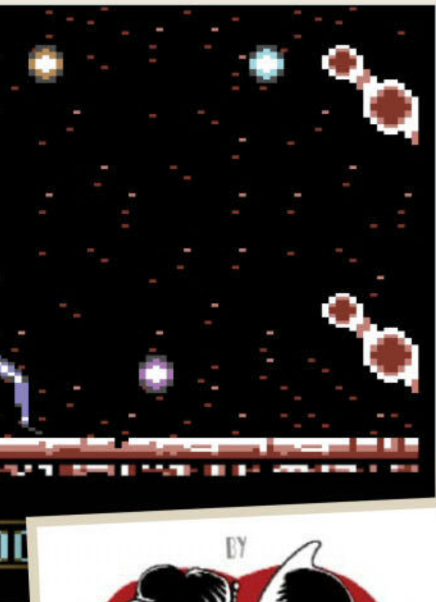
SHADOW OF THE BEAST
■ **YEAR:** 1989
■ **FORMAT:** PC Engine
This is a defining Amiga title, converting it to the PC Engine was a rather tough but ultimately satisfying challenge for Mike's coding skills.



1991

LEMMINGS
■ **YEAR:** 1991
■ **FORMAT:** Amiga/ST
This popular puzzler remains one of Scotland's finest gaming exports and Mike had a big role in getting these blue rodents marching forwards.







» One of the many logos used by DMA design, Mike's home for over a decade.

> "With Lemmings, there is something very funny about killing all these tiny, cute characters in a variety of ways"
> *Mike Dailly*

claimed we'd copied the unicycle from them, which we hadn't. We had a unicycle in the office, we modelled it and then animated it. What annoyed me is that they were basically claiming ownership of any digital unicycle, which is just nonsense, but the judge thought otherwise. The deal ended up that we wouldn't make any more cartridges and they'd get an N64 devkit and we'd call it quits. That's why that game's so rare…"

It's a pity as *Uniracers* a fine game, quirky in all the right ways, and an excellent example of DMA's willingness to play with left-field ideas. And it was this spirit that would ultimately give the company its most defining title. By early 1994, Mike was doing research and development and was playing around with an isometric engine. Finding it a little boring, he endeavoured to make the visuals 'spin', and this new rotating engine was something that caught the eye of David Jones, who passed it on to one of his teams to develop further. It proved to be the first tentative steps towards *Grand Theft Auto*. The original game released on PC and PlayStation in 1997 owes a debt to Mike's initial work and proof of concept demos, particularly the bird's eye view of the expansive city itself, as well as his work optimising the code during the game's development.

"The first time I saw that top-down view of the car driving through the city, that was so cool," smiles Mike. "I just love it when they do that in movies, flying over a city."

Mike also did some groundbreaking work on a 3D texture mapping engine in the mid-Nineties, a prescient move given the direction *Grand Theft Auto* would eventually take. He did stay at DMA to see *GTA II* completed and also worked on early Dreamcast title *Wild Metal* but despite David Jones offering him a PS2 devkit and free rein to experiment with Sony's soon to be released console, Mike left DMA in 1999 after a decade at the company.

"I was stagnant there," says Mike. "I felt I was too much part of the furniture. Nothing was changing and I needed a break. Russell Kay, who'd been at DMA in the early days and had left after *Lemmings 2* to set up his own company, offered me a job heading up the R&D department."

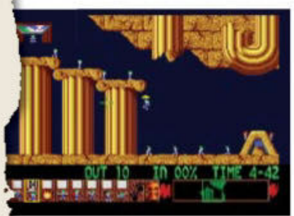
24-hour Programming People

As you may know, DMA, the company Mike helped to establish, evolved into Rockstar North, responsible for *Manhunt* and the monolithic *GTA* series. We wondered if there was any of the rockstar lifestyle during those early days? "We were techy nerds," Mike laughs. "We don't party! We loved coding. DMA was basically taking four friends used to programming things in their bedrooms and putting them in an office. In the first year of DMA, about 1989, I think, we did this 24-hour coding thing for a charity telethon, making an Amiga game from scratch in one day. That was about as crazy as it got…"

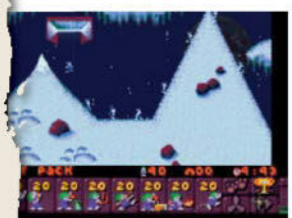
Dailly on Dailly



Mike picks his three favourite titles



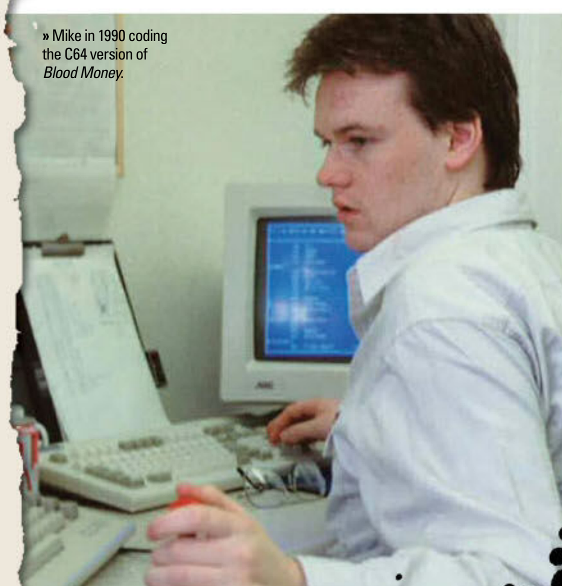
■ LEMMINGS
It was just a really funny game and making levels for it was just so much fun. We could've spent years churning out different levels. *Lemmings* was brilliant.



■ LEMMINGS 2
I wrote the code for it on the SNES and that was really enjoyable. The SNES is my favourite machine and making it do things it wasn't supposed to do was a joy.



■ GAMEMAKER:STUDIO
I love empowering people to make games. We have kids under ten and people over seventy making and selling games. Letting them do that is just something I love.



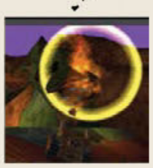
» Mike in 1990 coding the C64 version of *Blood Money*.

1999



GRAND THEFT AUTO II
■ YEAR: 1999
■ FORMAT: PC
Having contributed much to the genesis of the original *GTA* game, Mike ended his tenure at DMA on a high through his work on this fine sequel.

1999



WILD METAL
■ YEAR: 1999
■ FORMAT: Dreamcast
Mike worked on the PC and console version of this tank battler, which proved to be entertaining, if you could get to grips with the controls.

2002



F1 2002
■ YEAR: 2002
■ FORMAT: Xbox
Driving games were a new genre for Mike to tackle, but he put his foot down hard on the acceleration and added much of the polish to this fine racer.

2009



GAMEMAKER:STUDIO
■ YEAR: 2009
■ FORMAT: Various
Mike works on this powerful game-making tool, used to create the excellent *Spelunky*, *Hotline Miami* and *Nidhogg* (pictured) amongst many others.



» [PS2] After leaving DMA, Mike accelerated into PS2 and Xbox games development.

> "I love those old 8-bit machines. I think they've still got a lot to give" *Mike Dailly*

So Mike moved to Visual Sciences and was soon helping his new employers move up from the PlayStation to the PS2 and Xbox and working in a new genre for him, the Formula One racer. Things went positively with both *F1 2000* and *F1 2002* for PC and consoles being well received and Mike also contributed to the company's efficiency by cannibalising old Action Replay cartridges and creating cheap PlayStation devkits that cost a tenner rather than over a grand, meaning everyone could have their own.

"Then EA screwed it all up," he says, shaking his head. "I'd ported over PS2 code to do the Xbox version of F1 and used that hardware to make these beautiful wet roads. We got incredibly high definition textures, water reflecting off individual stones. Beautiful stuff. Basically we improved the engine and then the producers came up and asked how they could put it back into their PS2 game. I told them… and then they said we couldn't put it in our game because we didn't have time. That drove me up the wall. Then they'd start quibbling about who they were paying for in the office and forcing us to make people redundant. I'd just had enough…"

So Mike went mobile in both senses, leaving Visual Sciences to join Simian Industries and write games for the latest handsets, which had certain parallels to his Eighties coding experience. "Phone games were just moving on from simple stuff like *Snake* to running Java," explains Mike, "so all of a sudden you have these low tech devices that you need a bit of expertise to write for. Yeah, it was getting back to that technical know-how of my Plus/4 days. You're writing small games in a few months. Fun and quick. I was fed up with games that took years to write."

Mike flourished in this new environment, producing a dozen games for various 3G handsets during the first half of the Noughties including versions of Atari's arcade classics *Centipede* and *Asteroids*. "I actually had a *Centipede* cab I'd bought off my mother-in-law's school for £50," he winks, "though I actually hate that game! I think I did an okay job but with *Asteroids*, I had a ball. It was actually *Asteroids Deluxe*, which has a shield and some of the physics worked a bit like *Ballistix*. I was interested in getting that vector look just right."

Things went well for four years until money mysteriously began disappearing from the company accounts, thanks to some shenanigans by unscrupulous directors. Since leaving Simian Industries, Mike has worked at Realtime Worlds, where he managed to use ordnance survey maps to digitise the whole of Scotland and currently works at YoYo Games, home of the powerful GameMaker:Studio, helping to evolve what began as a hobbyist tool into something viable for commercial games. "We want to make it easy for people to make games," he enthuses. "Take the tech away and let you do what you really want to do, which is write the game of your dreams!"

It's an admirable sentiment though despite all his work on cutting-edge technology, Mike has never forgotten his coding roots. Over the years, he's produced emulators for the C64 and Spectrum, allowing Dreamcast and PS2 owners to experience the joys of 8-bit gaming on their consoles and enthusiastically details the challenge of keyboard mapping, screen rendering, the idiosyncrasies of each CPU and the nightmare of dealing with self-modifying code, dynamic sound and Commodore chipsets that can change RAM on the fly.

"I still love those old machines," he grins. "I think they have still got a lot to give. Writing an emulator and getting games running on it is still a thrill. It's interesting work and really good fun."

Unsurprisingly, Mike is especially proud of his continuing work creating and refining his Commodore Plus/4 emulator, which has even drawn him into the world of homebrew games development. Since 1999, he's been contributing to a shoot-'em-up for his beloved Plus/4 called *XeO3*. "I will finish it at some point," he assures us. "It will be a really good game… one day!"

You'll be reading about it in our Homebrew section, hopefully before issue 200, folks…*

Many thanks to Vinny for the introduction and Martyn for additional help.

Trivia

The name DMA is a reference to Amiga hardware and stands for Direct Memory Access, though David Jones took to telling gullible journalists it actually 'Doesn't Mean Anything'.

DESERT ISLAND DISKS

Readers' Questions

Paranoid Marvin: What was the thought process behind the 'Nuke' option in *Lemmings* and shouldn't all games have this option?
[Laughs] we didn't know how to abort the level and we had to do it somehow. David [Jones] really wanted to use the old school *Defender* explosions… and yeah, every game should have it!

Merman: Do you prefer assembly language or higher level languages such as C?
[Long pause and many sighs] each thing is a tool unto itself. I love spending days on a small piece of assembler, making it really fast, but churning out games written fluently in assembler is hard going. I much prefer a higher level language for that and C Sharp is my language of choice.

Mayhem: Do you know what games used the *Pac-Man* load-a-game on the C64 because I don't recall seeing it?
Around when I was doing *Blood Money* for the C64, I had written my own turbo tape loaders. They were all interrupt-driven so, in theory, I could have a little mini-game playing on top of them. I'd written a very simple *Pac-Man* game over a weekend which you could play while *Blood Money* loaded but unfortunately the game loading failed on a couple of tests and Psygnosis got really nervous and wouldn't let me use it, even though I slowed it down and fixed it!

Markopoloman: Why hasn't *Lemmings* ever been expanded into other styles and developed for later systems?
When it came out, ownership was split between DMA and Psygnosis, then when David needed money, he sold it to Psygnosis. They became Sony and they won't let their IP go on to other platforms. They never really decided to come up with something new. They've let *Lemmings* vegetate and that really annoys me. You could do so much with those characters!

TT: Which of your unfinished projects do you wish you had got done and released?
I'm definitely going to finish the Plus/4 shooter and I did play with the Raspberry Pi over Christmas as I'm a huge fan and would like to go back to it soon. The biggest one I really wish we'd finished was a game concept David came up with called *Attack*. It was this single button-masher and he never really got it working but just before I left DMA, I figured out a way we could do it. It's kind of a *Lemmings* thing with loads of characters I'd love to do it one day.

Mike Dailly

Desert Island Disks

The games that Mike simply couldn't live without

















01 Super Mario World (SNES)

I was determined to play it until I got 100 per cent and it was the most enjoyable game I've ever played. I can still go back to it now and never want to put it down.

02 Monkey Island 2 (AMIGA)

Both this and the original I could play over and over again. It's one of the funniest games I've ever played. Infuriating puzzles and all the humour in it… it's just brilliant.

03 Manic Miner (SPECTRUM)

This is a nice simple platformer. I've still not beaten it and it's still great to play.

04 Armalyte (COMMODORE 64)

The pinnacle of shoot-'em-ups and it's really, really well done. It has a great soundtrack, too.

05 Ridge Racer (ARCADE)

I bought a PlayStation because its version was arcade perfect. My wife and I played it to death. An immaculate game. I've not played a bad *Ridge Racer* game, to be honest.

06 Assassin's Creed II (PLAYSTATION 3)

I'd have to have one in this series and I think I'll take the second one. It's loads of fun to run about, jump about and there's good combat in this one.

07 Crackdown (XBOX 360)

Great fun. Fantastic jumping and climbing again and great combat. The best lock-on shooting mechanic I've played. I don't normally play shooters on consoles because you can never aim properly but this got it down to a T. And made in Scotland… from girders!

08 Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare (PC)

I liked the sniper mode and the slow-motion bullets. I spent so much time trying to perfect sniper hits, trying to take everyone out with single bullets. I have so much fun with that.

» [PlayStation] This is where the behemoth began…





» RETROREVIVAL

Blockbusters

CAN I HAVE A P PLEASE, BOB?

» **COMMODORE 64**
» **TV GAMES** » **1988**

If you want to know why I'm a quiz show fiend, *Blockbusters* could easily take as much blame as anything else. It'd come on after *CITV* had finished, drawing me in with brightly coloured hexagons and a jaunty theme tune, and keeping me entertained with vocabulary-based questions and the infinitely affable Bob Holness. These were simple pleasures for an odd child, and I was most definitely an odd child.

You can imagine how thrilled I was when I found out that there was a C64 version of the game, and it is actually pretty amusing, for a while. While the show's contestants were always sixth form students, the questions can occasionally trip up adults – especially if you restrict yourself by picking the highest difficulty level, which will give you just a few seconds to begin your answer before the CPU answers and wins the space. The game also has quite a few sets of questions, allowing you to rotate to another set when things start to become familiar.

Unfortunately, despite a neat digitised Bob asking the questions, fans of the show might well find that the game doesn't measure up to their expectations. The Gold Run round, which posed more difficult questions about phrases, has disappeared and the SID rendition of Ed Welch's theme tune just isn't long enough. However, if you can content yourself with firing up the internet every time you want to hear the tune as it should sound, you'll find that *Blockbusters* for the C64 is a pretty decent quiz. *


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ANSWER



>> This month it's the month of remakes. We take a look at the HD remaster of Resident Evil 0 by Capcom and Night Dive Studios' take on the original dinosaur blaster, Turok



» [PS4] Oh look, infected dogs bursting through a window. For some reason, we saw that one coming…

Resident Evil 0 HD

GOING BACK TO BEFORE THE BEGINNING...

INFORMATION

- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PS4
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** XBOX ONE, PC
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £15.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** CAPCOM
- » **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM
- » **PLAYERS:** 1



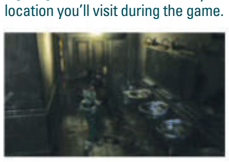
Revolutionary games are best appreciated in their own time – before the inevitable flood of copycats, and before the technical advances are figured out by other developers. *Resident Evil 0* was not a revolutionary game. The fifth major *Resident Evil* release in less than seven years arrived in late 2002, just eight months after the remake of the original game. What's more, the original release was a GameCube-exclusive, meaning that it was somewhat at odds with the machine's family-friendly image. Between a public that was experiencing franchise fatigue and a release on a machine that the target audience just wasn't buying, *Resident Evil 0* sold 1.25 million copies – not a disaster by any means, but the lowest for any game in the series at that point. As a result, it's entirely possible that more than a few of you may have missed *Resident Evil Zero* at the time, and will be playing it for the very first time – and in some ways, that's preferable.

This entry takes place in the period immediately before the original *Resident Evil*, and follows STARS Bravo Team member Rebecca Chambers as she investigates the Arklay mountains area surrounding the Spencer Mansion. Of course, things soon take a turn for the worse as her team is split up and she's forced to cooperate with Billy Coen, a convicted murderer on death row. The team is represented in gameplay with a special partner-switching system, in which you can instantaneously switch between Rebecca and Billy at the tap of a button, with the CPU taking control of whichever character you're not playing.

The remaster work here is excellent. While you won't mistake *Resident Evil 0* for a game made in 2016, the original prerendered backgrounds and high-quality character models always looked great and have aged gracefully. In particular, the animated backgrounds are beautifully dynamic in the early train sequence, which gives the game a distinct look that sets it apart from the *Resident Evil* remake.



» [PS4] Umbrella's labs are a key location you'll visit during the game.



» [PS4] The leech zombies are a real pain to destroy.

BRIEF HISTORY

» The last of the traditional *Resident Evil* games was originally planned as an N64 release, taking advantage of instantaneous cartridge access to implement a unique two-character gameplay style. However, the declining N64 market and brand new GameCube hardware led Capcom to change their plans and completely overhaul the game.

» [PS4] Surprisingly, many of the bosses in this game are infected animals or other biological terrors.



PICKS OF THE MONTH



DARRAN
Resident Evil 0 HD
Like *Turok*, *Resident Evil 0 HD* is certainly showing its age, but it's had a much better update, so it was the obvious game to go for.



NICK
Resident Evil 0 HD
It's just like a hungry zombie – whenever I think I'm done with the damn thing, it manages to sink its teeth into me again.

FORGOTTEN FRIENDS

Here are five more entries in famous franchises that are overdue for a re-release…

SUPER MARIO BROS. SPECIAL



■ It's hard to emulate and it's not actually as much fun as a Nintendo-made *Mario* game, but for the sake of historical curiosity alone Hudson Soft's home computer take on the famous platformer is worth a re-release. Most people don't even know that it exists!

KNUCKLES' CHAOTIX



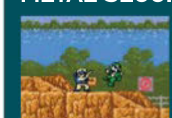
■ One of the most interesting spins on the *Sonic The Hedgehog* formula is confined to the 32X add-on for the Mega Drive, and that's a crying shame. The two-character linked play isn't to everyone's taste, but if you can get the hang of the unusual physics there's some fun to be had here.

R-TYPE LEO



■ It's not a traditional *R-Type* outing thanks to the lack of the series' characteristic Force add-on, but *R-Type Leo* is a high-quality arcade shoot-'em-up and it's a travesty that it's never seen a single conversion or re-release. We're so starved that we'd even settle for a mobile version at this point.

METAL SLUG: 1ST MISSION



■ This handheld title has remained exclusive to the Neo-Geo Pocket Color, as it was omitted from the *Metal Slug Anthology* pack. It's actually one of the most interesting games in the *Metal Slug* series, trading one-hit kills and linear progression for alternative exits and a life bar.

METAL GEAR SOLID



■ That's the Game Boy Color one, mind. This was a great handheld-exclusive adventure that could be an excellent addition to the Virtual Console library, but we're unlikely to see such a release actually take place given Konami's current focus on free-to-play mobile games and pachinko machines.

Likewise, it's refreshing to revisit the original *Resident Evil* formula if you've spent a long time away from the series, or limited yourself to the modern action-oriented take on the series. While the set-ups to some jump scares are predictable (if you don't see passengers rising from their train seats coming, you might be a zombie yourself), the game still builds up a sense of dread nicely and the puzzles are grounded in logic. The partner switching is a unique mechanic within the series, and opens up some nice puzzle opportunities – for example, an early puzzle separates the pair with a locked door, and requires them to pass items via a service elevator in order to free the stranded partner.

Unfortunately, there are ways in which *Resident Evil 0* still shows its age. The need to be positioned very squarely next to an item before you can pick it up can be frustrating, especially as the design team chose to omit item boxes in *Resident Evil 0*. This means that you're limited to holding whatever your characters can carry, and you'll spend altogether too much time just swapping items between the two of them – it's a slightly fiddly process, and one which tends to result in you leaving clumps of useful things in safe rooms. Likewise, the game really makes you show your work. It doesn't matter if it's obvious that the key card you picked up opens the door you're examining, you've got to go into your inventory and physically select the 'use' option to actually unlock it. It's far from ideal, and felt dated over a decade ago, so it would have been nice to see Capcom streamline the process a bit.

Where Capcom has made improvements to the experience, they're welcome. The key one is the replacement of *Resident Evil*'s traditional and much-maligned control system with a modern analogue control system. It makes avoiding the undead a little easier, but environments are claustrophobic enough that it doesn't alter the balance significantly. Additionally, traditionalists can still choose to steer the protagonists around like tanks if they prefer the old controls.

Overall, this is a very good update of a game that was already pretty fiddly and fussy in its original incarnation. If you've got fond memories of the original or if you're a *Resident Evil* fan that missed it first time around, you're likely to expect the series' typical idiosyncracies and forgive them somewhat. If you're a *Resident Evil* novice wondering what all the fuss is about, this isn't an ideal starting point – the remake of the original game shares some of the same flaws, but doesn't force you to spend so much time managing your inventory and just lets you get on with your adventure. There's still a good game here, just be sure you've got the patience for it. ✱

In a nutshell

We can't fault the update work here, but it's clear why the *Resident Evil* series was running out of steam in its original format. It's still a worthwhile game, but dated mechanics betray its true age.

RetroGamer_Mag scored 7 for
Resident Evil 0
7
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



» [PS4] The train environment makes it hard to avoid zombies, forcing you to engage in combat.



» [PS4] The remaster has an added Wesker mode, in which the series' resident baddie replaces Billy.

✱WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
ALONE IN THE DARK (PC)



▼ SOMETHING NEW
THE EVIL WITHIN (PS4)





[PS4] Billy and Rebecca can fight together, with the CPU controlling one character.



» [PC] There are some meaty enemies in the game that can withstand a lot of punishment.

YOU CAN TEACH AN OLD DINOSAUR NEW TRICKS

Turok Remastered

INFORMATION

- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PC
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A
- » **RELEASED:** Out now
- » **PRICE:** £14.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** Night Dive Studios
- » **DEVELOPER:** Night Dive Studios
- » **PLAYERS:** 1

BRIEF HISTORY

» *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter* received critical acclaim on its release in 1997. The game proved popular, and received three N64 sequels, with a new game, *Turok: Evolution* appearing in 2002. A 2008 reboot, *Turok*, managed to shift over a million units in 2008, but the proposed sequel never appeared.

WHY NOT TRY

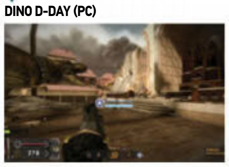
▼ SOMETHING OLD

DINO CRISIS (PC)



▽ SOMETHING NEW

DINO D-DAY (PC)





It might not be the case now, but *Turok* was a huge deal when it was released for the N64 back in 1997. It not only delivered an extremely graphic game on Nintendo's new console, but it also made big leaps in the FPS genre, at least if you were a console owner…

Play *Turok* today and you realise that, while it's a lot of fun, it's definitely a product of its gore-drenched time. While the areas are improved over games like *Quake* and *Doom*, they still manage to feel surprisingly empty at times. This becomes more apparent when you switch off the fog that clouded the original game back in 1997. It's a nice option to have, particularly as it now lets you plan your attacks against enemies more easily, but it also highlights the fact that the enemy AI was a tad ropey, with many enemies simply not noticing you until you're almost on top of them.

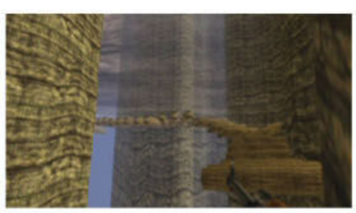
Perhaps the biggest bugbear is the archaic save system that the game utilises. As with the original N64 release, you have to save at specific points in the game and some of the points are very far apart. It wouldn't be so bad, but the large reliance on jumping does make for some very fraught experiences, so it's rather astonishing that a quicksave feature wasn't implemented. Here's hoping it's added in at a later date.

Not being able to save at any time seems silly when it's clear that a lot of improvements have been made to *Turok*. The game is well optimised, running amazingly quickly on the two PCs we used. Design tweaks have been made and a number of graphical effects have been added which range from dynamic lighting, bloom, FXAA and enhanced water effects, to the ability to freely rebind all of your button inputs. It obviously still looks like a game that's very much of its time, but it's certainly not ugly and is a solid update from Night Dive Studios.

Gameplay-wise, *Turok* is something of a mixed bag. It features far less variety in its enemies then we remember, but the humans are well-animated with some hilarious death sequences. The weapons are effective and over-the-top, but the bosses are very hit and miss. Level design holds up well, and, while the stages do feel empty in places, there are lots of hidden areas to explore and plenty of secrets to discover. The seeking out of keys that are needed to unlock later levels is a pain and the first boss is horrible, but there's no denying that shooting dinosaurs with stupidly powerful weapons is still very entertaining.

Turok is clearly flawed and in need of a save state function, but we had a lot of fun with it. The textures may not have been redone, but a lot of work has clearly gone into the game. It's perhaps a fiver too expensive, but it's a strong port of a dated, but enjoyable, game.





» [PC] Two examples of the game, one with the original fog and one without it.



» [PC] The bosses are a mixed affair, ranging from brilliant to incredibly frustrating.

RetroGamer_Mag scored **6** for Turok Remastered

6

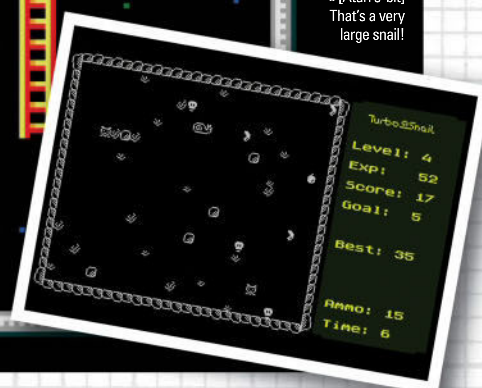
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Gamers Homebrew

Brewing since 2005



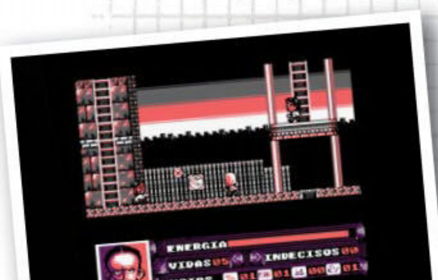
» [Amiga] Two heads are better than one.



» [Atari 8-bit] That's a very large snail!

Gaming NEWS

CONVERSIONS AND POLITICS



» [Amstrad] A satirical platformer for the CPC.

The Amiga has done very well for new homebrew releases recently, with conversions of NES action game *Chase* from Shiru and RetroSouls' brain-bending Spectrum puzzler, *Alter Ego,* being new additions. Interestingly, the former isn't finished – there are what appear to be 'debug' features enabled and it runs out of levels quickly but that may be due to the original being a tutorial – but it's still a simple but fun *Pac-Man*-style game.

The player's character in *Alter Ego* has an ethereal version on-screen who copies each move made but mirrors them either horizontally or vertically, with the objective being to collect all of the items on each screen safely; this often involves switching the real and ghostly versions over with a jab of the fire button, but there's a limit on how often that trick can be pulled on each stage. Follow Kikstart.eu/alter-ego-amiga for more.

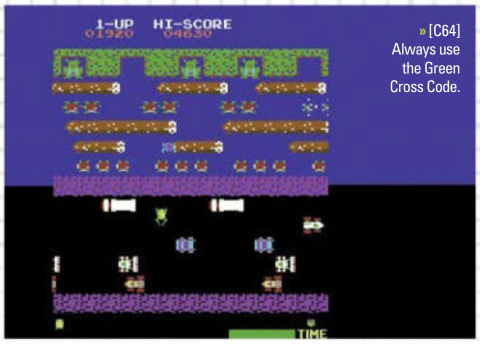
We're sticking with the Amiga and indeed conversions here, because our attention was recently drawn to an ongoing port of Graftgold's top-down *Gauntlet*-style game *Ranarama* from the Atari ST to the Amiga which looks to be in an advanced state in the YouTube video we've magically stored behind Kikstart.eu/rana-video-amiga.

Adiós A La Casta for the Amstrad CPC is a platform game about politics and that's something we don't get to say very often! It's a satirical comment on Spain's current political state with the player taking on the role of politician Pablo Iglesias – or more accurately a caricature of him – who wants to control the country. Votes can be collected and either have a party's symbol on them –also parodies of real political party logos – or a question mark for a floating voter. Cross your ballot papers over at Kikstart.eu/adios-casta-cpc – the game is only available in Spanish and has a few bugs at the time of writing, but the creator is currently working on those.

And finally a couple of smaller games we found interesting; *Turbo Snail* on the Atari 8-bit is a game based loosely on the classic *Snake* idea where the titular shell dweller is up against the clock to collect as much fruit as possible. Over on the C64 is *Lazik* – which is called *Dude* in the supplied English version – where a little man has to collect all of the keys to get out of the stage. Kikstart.eu/turbo-snail-a8 and Kikstart.eu/lazik-c64 respectively for more information.

NEW GAMES NEEDED

If you have a homebrew project you would like to see featured then please contact us at: **retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk**



» [C64] Always use the Green Cross Code.

HOPPING TO IT

There have been quite a few unofficial versions of coin-op classic *Frogger* for the C64 over the years with some being more faithful to the subject matter than others, but developers Hokuto Force is taking things up a couple of notches – if the recently released second preview of their game *Frogger Arcade* is anything to go by, because it even utilises a portrait style screen layout to match the original game's screen layout! Hop over to Kikstart.eu/frogger-prv-c64 for a playable preview which is now in a very advanced state.

> **"Adiós A La Casta is a game about politics and that's something we don't get to say very often"**



EARTH-SHATTERING KABOOM

You can never have enough explosions in life so we were pleased to hear about Mat Gubbins' *Bomb Munchies* for the Spectrum. We've given it a quick play and the action appears to have been quite closely based on the classic *Bomberman* formula of placing bombs and running away before the fuse burns down. Along with a couple of single-player modes, the game can also support up to four simultaneous humans for groups of gamers whose greatest joy in life is detonating explosive devices next to their friends. Take a look behind Kikstart.eu/bomb-munchies-spec.

HOMEBREW HEROES

It isn't often that we see new vehicular games from the driver's perspective on the 8-bit systems, so, when the enhanced BBC to Atari 8-bit port of E-Type came out, we were driven to ask co-developer Irgendwer a few questions



THE BIG INTERVIEW · IRGENDWER

So our first question has to be: what drew you to port *E-Type*?
After the BBC port of *Perplexity* and *Lunar Jet Man*, Frantisek 'Fandal' Houra came up with a request for some assets for a game he already had started to port.
It was November 2014 and the game was *E-Type*. All three collaborations were triggered by him.

And how many people were involved with the conversion?
Just him and me. Typically I convert title art, create some music, sound effects and sometimes graphics when I think they improve the port, like the dashboard. We rarely discuss details, the code is almost entirely done by Fandal. We complement each other quite well, I'm employed as a software developer so don't program in my leisure time.

How hard is taking a BBC Micro game and making it run on the Atari 8-bit?
The BBC has less memory than the Atari, which leaves space for modifications like richer sound. On the other hand the BBC with its 2MHz DMA penalty-free processor is faster, so usually you trade memory for speed like unrolling loops and build tables to short-cut calculations. A big issue is the screen memory which matches a char layout on the Atari, if the original screen is 32 bytes wide the Atari can feign that, otherwise a hard time handling the misalignments begin.



» [Atari 8-bit] These roads are always being repaired!

Was there anything you'd have done differently?
I'm content with the result. In fact I was sceptical if the game is a good choice. The playability wasn't the best. I found a review of the original criticising the view on the road and had the same frustration while playing the port so asked Fandal if he could introduce a first-person view.

What has the feedback from players been like?
There was some response at the AtariAge forum, but in relation to the number of downloads the situation can be a bit disappointing. Beside indications that the first-person view was a good idea, I don't know how it was received. Maybe it is too early, feedback comes later as a review, as a choice for a high-score club or in the 'Kaz Compo' where the best games of the year are voted on.

And finally, have you decided on your next project yet?
Beside the collaboration with Fandal, I'm working on other software and hardware things alone but am not a friend of talking about upcoming projects, as this increases the pressure to deliver in the 'nearer future' and the focus may change. Fandal and I are working on a game, but this time it isn't a port.



·DO YOU· REMEMBER?

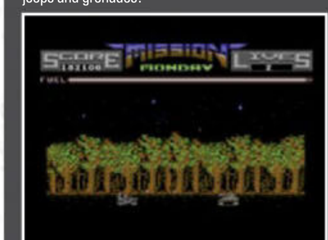
Every programmer has to start somewhere and for C64 developers Ashley Routledge and David Saunders it was writing demos and small games for UK online service Compunet. *Mission Monday* is one of their earlier efforts and based loosely on *Moon Patrol*.

The heroic Willy Warmstart – whose previous outing was *Snowball Sunday* where he lobbed snowballs at friends – is taking his jeep through a forest swarming with enemies that don't like him much. The jeep is armed with a grenade launcher, but a degree of timing is required because things are destroyed by explosions rather than the shells themselves.

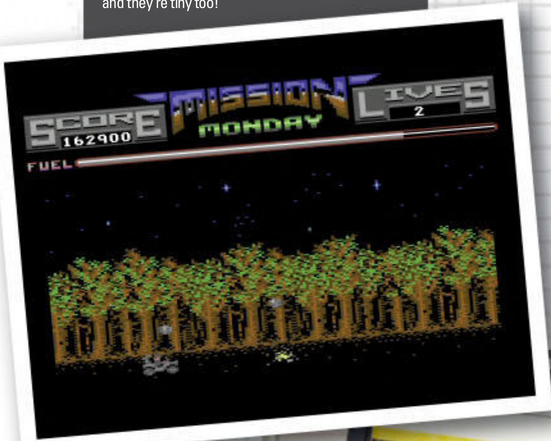
It isn't a particularly long game but is still loads of fun to play and there's a wonderful 'feature' which, when combined with a little skill, gives some ridiculously high scores. Take a look over at, Kikstart.eu/mission-monday-c64.

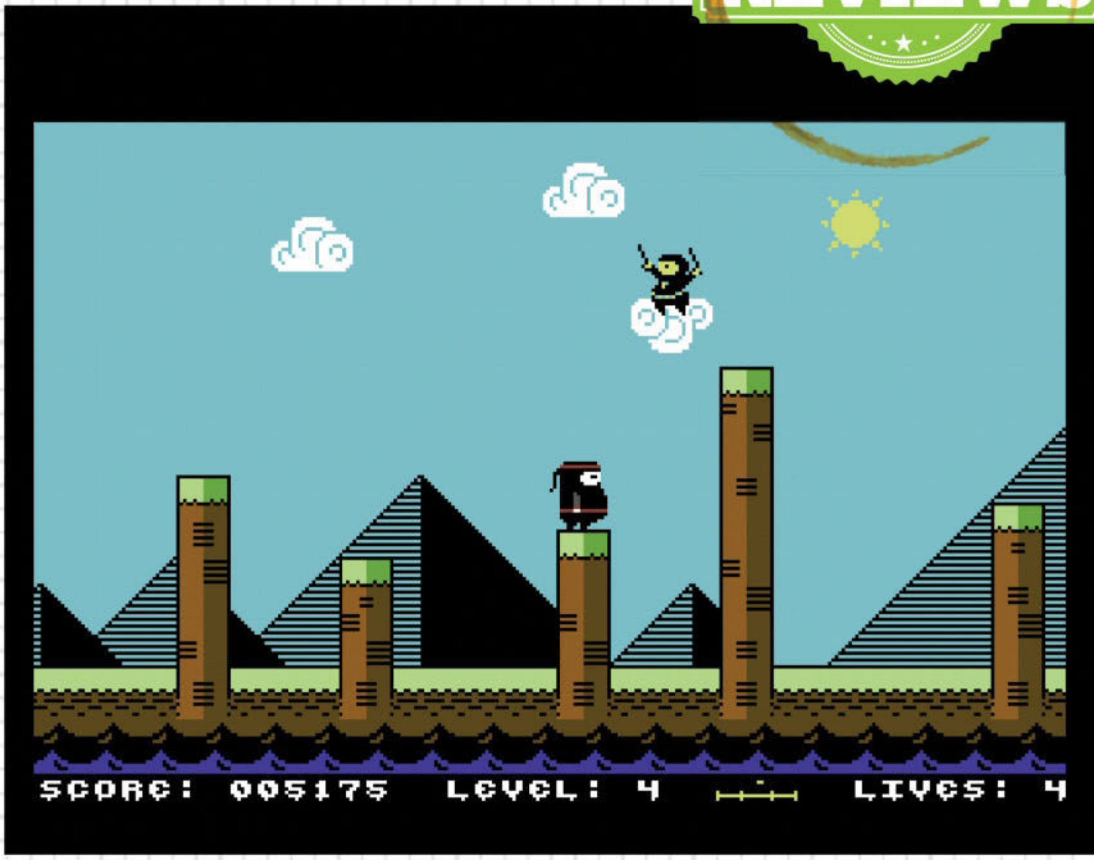


» [C64] It's sometimes like *Where's Wally*, but with jeeps and grenades!



» [C64] Tanks aren't as tough as they look… and they're tiny too!





JUMP NINJA

» **FORMAT:** COMMODORE 64 » **DEVELOPER:** WANAX » **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/JUMP-NINJA-C64 » **PRICE:** FREE

Along with being skilled martial artists ninjas have always been portrayed as incredibly athletic and graceful, effortlessly leaping through the air to a perfect landing every time; the same is sort of true for the slightly overweight one in *Jump Ninja*, except that he'll need more than a little help as he leaps from pole to pole in a constantly scrolling world. The controls are simple enough, the fire button makes the ninja leap into the air while moving left and right will control his flight or make him walk if he's currently standing.

The earlier levels are quite literally the ninja against the world, all he has to worry about are the leaps between pillars and keeping ahead of the scrolling because falling to the floor, colliding with the body of a pillar or being pushed into the left hand edge of the screen are all fatal. And things only get worse as the game progresses, when the already tricky jumps are made even more difficult by the appearance of cloud-riding ninjas and later shuriken stars which appear randomly but have an odd knack of knowing to show up when they'll be most difficult to deal with.

This is a simple title which takes design cues from some of the casual mobile games like *Flappy Bird* or *Canabalt* but with a bit more flexibility in the controls so, although this is an uncomplicated action game, that doesn't mean it isn't going to put up a fight and players should expect to find themselves yelling at their C64. The game's coder, Wanax, says in a note that he wrote *Jump Ninja* for his son Fancesco and that he was hoping that it might attract new generations of young gamers to the C64 – that's a message we can certainly get behind here at **Retro Gamer** and we're pleased to see that it seems to already be working too, at least based on some of the comments online.

8 RetroGamer_Mag scored **8** for Jump Ninja
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



» [C64] Going right over the enemy's head by quite a distance.



» [C64] Hazards when you're a Ninja are in a different league!



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E-TYPE

» **FORMAT:** ATARI 8-BIT » **PRICE:** FREE
» **DEVELOPER:** FANDAL AND IRGENDWER
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/E-TYPE-A8

Feel the wind on your face as your *E-Type* roars along, swerving between other vehicles and other road hazards. The joyride will be over when the car becomes too damaged to continue – falling into roadside water will stop it dead – or the timer expires; the latter can be extended by, perversely, mowing down the police officers warning motorists of oncoming hazards.

E-Type is about getting points and travelling far, but racking up a decent score takes a bit of work and the developers have said that it's best to concentrate on avoiding collisions and 'collecting' the coppers rather than just tearing up the tarmac at speed. It takes a little getting used to and we'd advise any boy racers reading to use the first person mode because the car itself obscures the view of oncoming obstacles. Please note that this game requires a 128K Atari 8-bit to run.

8 RetroGamer_Mag scored 8 for E-Type
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

» [Atari 8-bit] I got me a car, it's as big as a whale.



» [Atari 8-bit] I drove along the A45, I had her up to 58.



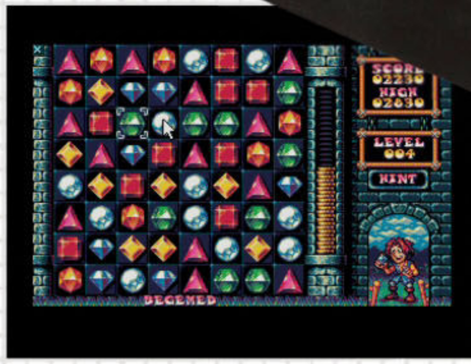
BEGEMED

» **FORMAT:** ATARI STE » **DEVELOPER:** FALCON USERS NETHERLANDS
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/BEGEMED-STE » **PRICE:** FREE

For the half a dozen or so goat herders who haven't played *Bejeweled*, the playfield is full of brightly coloured jewels and the player must swap adjacent gems to create rows or columns of three; groups are removed and everything above them will cascade down. Each move has to end up with gems being removed and the game is over if there's no possible moves on the board.

BeGEMeD certainly looks the part and would be a great conversion of said title except that there are some issues, at least in the Atari STe version we were playing; in particular there seems to be a problem where the game will declare that there are no moves left when there's at least one clearly visible. It's still entertaining to play, though, but we're hoping that particular issue will be fixed in a future revision of the game because everything else has been executed so well.

7 RetroGamer_Mag scored 7 for Begemed
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE





» [Atari STe] Who doesn't enjoy a good, pun-laden title like this one?

» [Atari STe] Starting to develop a serious case of 'gem blindness'.

> "Getting the timing of each leap right is challenging"



» [MSX] Defeating demons will incur a large amount of paperwork.

NINJA SAVIOR

» **FORMAT:** MSX » **DEVELOPER:** RELEVO GAMES
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/NINJA-SAVIOR-MSX » **PRICE:** FREE

There's an old and almost mythical tale about the village of Usuki in Japan which talks of the fateful night that the residents found themselves besieged by all manner of creatures; to combat this supernatural attack they summoned the *Ninja Savior*.

This mystical ninja leaps back and forth between two houses and must collect scrolls and paper spells to charge the spell bar at the bottom of the screen while in transit which, when added together, can defeat the hovering demon; the bar will also be reduced by colliding with nasties while in flight and a life lost if it empties entirely. The walls aren't easy to grip either, so our hero slowly slides towards the flames below if he doesn't keep moving.

Getting the timing of each leap right is challenging but enjoyable and we had a lot of fun battling the monsters hovering in the skies above Usuki.



8 RetroGamer_Mag scored 8 for Ninja Saviour
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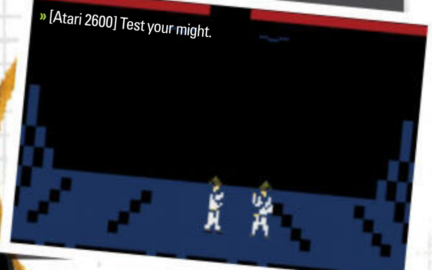
ROUNDUP

At the end of last year Atari Age user Jinroh released a very incomplete but sort of playable Atari 2600 tech demo of Mortal Kombat. Kikstart.eu/mk-demo-2600 goes to the forum thread for a binary of what's been done so far.

Sticking with Atari, a conversion of *Xenon 2 Megablast* to the Jaguar is apparently under way based on the Atari ST version of the Bitmap Brothers' shooter, although due to licensing issues it'll be sporting a new soundtrack. Again, there's some discussion to follow at Atari Age behind Kikstart.eu/xenon-2-jag.

And to finish, there's a playable preview of a new Mega Drive platformer called *Dragon's Castle* to download at Kikstart.eu/dragons-castle-md – it's lacking music at the time of writing but the game itself is playable so we're looking forward to the finished version.

» [Atari 2600] Test your might.



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STAR LETTER

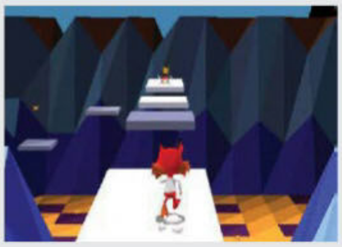
ONE MAN'S TRASH

Dear **Retro Gamer**,
I am not sure if this has been asked before but I'd love to see a feature and interviews of the people behind really bad games for example *Big Rigs: Over The Road Racing* on the PC. I have long suspected that the wrong version of that game was burned to the CD in the factory and it got shipped before anyone realised, as it is very hard to believe that any publisher in their right mind could seriously put out a game that hilariously bad on purpose! But it would be great to know for sure, I think it would be a really interesting read, if my theory is wrong and they thought they were releasing a great game then I'd love to hear their side of the story and find out their thinking of releasing a game like that. Was it a dare? A joke? Who knows?

I'm sure there are other really bad games out there that it would be interesting to find out the untold story, games like *Bubsy 3D* or *Superman 64* to name but a few.

What do you think guys?

Michael Winn



» [PlayStation] Do readers want to learn about the stories behind games like *Bubsy 3D*?

It's an interesting prospect for sure. We'll always be sure to cover the ups and downs of a series in a history piece and Gaming's Biggest Disasters was issue 141's cover feature, but we rarely cover individual bad games. We also used to feature a regular section called Retro Shamer which featured bad games, though often these weren't interview pieces.

We'd imagine that there are some interesting stories to tell, though. After all, Eidetic went on to make *Syphon Filter*, widely regarded as a PlayStation classic, after *Bubsy 3D*. What do you think to additional coverage of notoriously bad games, readers?

SILVER SONIC

Hi **RG**,
Over the last few weeks some pictures have been released on the *Sonic* Twitter account which are teasing the 25th anniversary. Do you have any more information about the anniversary and have you seen the pictures? The latest picture was guys from Game Grumps holding a Big The Cat plush toy, there was some number along the bottom of the picture. Do you know what the numbers mean? Thanks, great mag.

Allan Park

We're not exactly sure what's going on – we know that *Sonic*'s social media guy Aaron Webber (aka RubyEclipse) sent that Big plush toy to the Game Grumps team as a gift, but we've no idea about the numbers. Needless to say, we'll spill the beans about any *Sonic* anniversary plans as soon as we're able to – in fact, we're pretty sure Nick would literally explode if we tried to keep him quiet.



» [Dreamcast] Whatever happens for Sonic's 25th anniversary, we hope it involves more of Big.

STEAM VENTS

Dear Sir or Madam,
One good source of retro games on the PC is via Steam. With literally hundreds of titles in the Steam Library, albeit of varying quality, and new ones being added all the time, there is certainly something for everyone.

As an added bonus, many are HD versions (such as *Age Of Empires II*) or remastered versions as in the case of *Wings* and *Grim Fandango*!

Originally I was very dubious about Steam but installed it out of necessity for *Napoleon: Total War*. Now I am somewhat of a convert!

Stuart Hardy

Steam is certainly a good place for PC gamers to pick up retro games, but we'd also recommend other similar stores like GOG Galaxy and EA's Origin – you'll find some games that aren't on Steam, and both of the aforementioned stores occasionally do free games. We've managed to nab the likes of *Dungeon Keeper* and *Command & Conquer: Red Alert 2* without paying a penny, so it's well worth keeping an eye on multiple stores.

Of course, we do still have some misgivings about digital distribution. As a case in point, last issue was meant to feature a review of *Umihara Kawase Shun: Steam Edition*. Unfortunately the publisher closed and delisted the game before we went to press, mere weeks after making it available. Thankfully, it has been recently relisted by its new publisher, but it does highlight the dangers of using digital over physical games.

NEO NO-GO

Hi **RG**,
I don't usually write in as I'm normally happy with **Retro Gamer**, but when I saw that there was another Neo-Geo feature planned for issue 151 after it was already on the cover of issue 146, I had to speak up. I can understand that you've got to cover all aspects of retro gaming, but is there really so much mileage in covering a format

DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

Virtual Reality

When the Oculus Rift's eye-watering price point of £500 was announced, we couldn't help but wince. Some of our less experienced colleagues are very excited, but we've been here before and even though the tech has come a long way since the Nineties, we're not convinced that consumers will bite.



Don't forget to follow us online for all the latest retro updates

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CONTACT US

Snail Mail: Retro Gamer, Imagine Publishing, Richmond House, 33 Richmond Hill, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH2 6EZ

Email: retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk



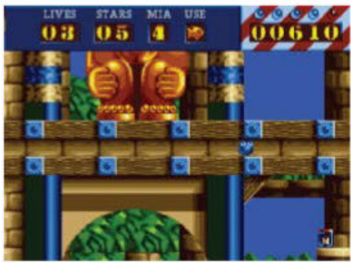
» [Neo-Geo] Sure, Neo-Geo cartridges cost hundreds of pounds, but a single credit in the arcade was 50p.

that barely anybody could afford? The Neo-Geo is something I can remember lusting after when I was younger, but it wasn't a big part of my gaming life because nobody I knew actually had one. Surely other readers must feel the same way?
Hallam Drake

It's true that few of us ever actually owned a Neo-Geo at home, but it's important to remember that the reason for that is that it was expensive arcade hardware in a console box. Ownership wasn't important to many players as a result, as they got to experience the system outside of the home. Having said that, we can see how you'd feel left out if you didn't have an arcade nearby – but that's all the more reason to check out the brilliant games you missed!

SECOND SQUAD

Hi guys,
I don't know if you saw, but *Putty Squad* was found and leaked for the Mega Drive after many years of being lost. Given the amount of fanfare with which the Amiga release was received, I'm surprised not to have seen this news in **Retro Gamer**! Please don't tell me that you guys are slipping?
Keith Graham



» [Mega Drive] We didn't miss *Putty Squad* for the Mega Drive, but it wasn't a huge story either...

Hi Keith, fret not. We didn't miss *Putty Squad* for the Mega Drive – the story actually went up on our website at the time. We've only got so much space in our news pages and it just wasn't as big a story as the Amiga release.

The Amiga version was the one that had received much more attention over the years, probably because the Mega Drive had no shortage of good platform games. Couple that with the fact that the Amiga one was an actual official release from the original publisher as opposed to an unauthorised leak, and we had contact with all the people that were involved in making that Amiga release happen, and the imbalance starts to make a lot of sense.





From the forum

» www.retrogamer.net/forum

Every month, Retro Gamer asks a question on the forum and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know...



Mega-CD Memories

theantmeister
We had a promotional VHS tape back in the day for the Mega-CD that I watched over and over. I clearly remember it had footage from *Sewer Shark*, which I thought was amazing. I never bought one, though. It was just too expensive. Of course, I realise now that watching that tape was basically 99 per cent of the fun of the Mega-CD.

jdanddiet
I had a love-hate relationship with the Mega-CD. Having forked out £200 for the Mark II version, I was disappointed by games such as *Road Avenger*, *Night Trap* and *Ground Zero Texas*. However games such as *Thunderhawk*, *Silpheed* and *The Terminator* meant I did actually spend a lot of time on it.

psj3809
Our rich friend bought a Mega-CD, at first I was jealous but then after seeing the FMV games he had for it the jealousy stopped straight away. He sold it a month or so later.

RetroMartin
I was still young when it came out and my cousins had one. As I wasn't a computer gamer the FMVs blew me away and playing *Sonic CD* as an avid *Sonic* fan was amazing!

The Laird
I remember my wealthy next door neighbour, Martin, buying one on launch day with *Sol Feace* and *Cobra Command* included. We weren't so impressed by the former but thought the latter was amazing. Martin was very careful about what games he bought so avoided all the rubbish FMV stuff and we spent hours playing the brilliant Jaguar XJ220, *Final Fight CD* and *Sensible Soccer* in two-player mode.

RetroBob
I received a Mega-CD for Christmas and bought *Rebel Assault*. It looks primitive now but at the time the FMV and graphical effects blew me away. I still enjoy playing through it today!

Mancman
To be honest, I've never seen it as anymore than a glorified video player. *Final Fight* and *Sonic CD* were the only titles that caught my attention.

retro GAMER

Imagine Publishing Ltd
Richmond House, 33 Richmond Hill,
Bournemouth, Dorset, BH2 6EZ
☎ +44 (0) 1202 586200
Web: www.imagine-publishing.co.uk
www.retrogamer.net
www.greatdigitalmags.com

Magazine team
Editor **Darran Jones**
retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk
☎ 01202 586237
Editor In Chief **Dan Hutchinson**
Senior Staff Writer **Nick Thorpe**
Production Editor **Drew Sleep**
Art Editor **Jonathan Wells**
Senior Art Editor **Andy Downes**
Photographer **James Sheppard**
Publishing Director **Aaron Asadi**
Head Of Design **Ross Andrews**

Contributors
Richard Burton, Martyn Carroll, David Crookes, Jonny Dimaline, Ian Dransfield, Paul Drury, Kieren Hawken, Jason Kelk, Tim Henderson, Adam Markiewicz, Graeme Mason, Rory Milne

Cover Art
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Advertising
Digital or printed media packs are available on request
Head of Sales Hang Deretz
☎ 01202 586442
hang.deretz@imagine-publishing.co.uk
Account Manager Anthony Godsell
☎ 01202 586420
anthony.godsell@imagine-publishing.co.uk

International
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Head of International Licensing Cathy Blackman
☎ +44 (0) 1202 586401
licensing@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Subscriptions
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13 issue subscription UK – £51.90
13 issue subscription Europe – £70
13 issue subscription ROW – £80

Circulation
Head of Circulation Darren Pearce
☎ 01202 586200

Production
Production Director Jane Hawkins
☎ 01202 586200

Finance
Finance Director Marco Peroni

Founder
Group Managing Director Damian Butt

Printing & Distribution
Printed by Southernprint Ltd, 17-21 Factory Road, Upton Industrial Estate, Poole, Dorset, BH16 5SN
☎ 01202 628 300

Distributed in the UK, Eire & Rest of the World by: Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU
☎ 0203 787 9060
www.marketforce.co.uk

Distributed in Australia by: Network Services (a division of Bauer Media Group), Level 21 Civic Tower, 66-68 Goulburn Street, Sydney, New South Wales 2000, Australia
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ISSN 1742-3155

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TIME GAL

» LaserDisc games struggled to hold our attention in the arcades, but with the Mega-CD's arrival in the early Nineties, publishers were hoping we'd be enraptured by FMV games. That's how we were introduced to Time Gal in which the scantily-clad Reika hops about history avoiding the many things that want her dead. Let's fast forward...



01

» Reika has found the time-travelling criminal Luda, but she's found herself in a bit of a bind, having been shunted towards him by a moving wall. She's now staring down the business end of a pretty big laser gun, too.



02

» Luckily, our heroine remembers that she has the ability to temporarily pause time! In the few seconds she has, she spins Luda and his laser cannon around, then legs it to safety. When time resumes, Luda realises what he's aiming at...



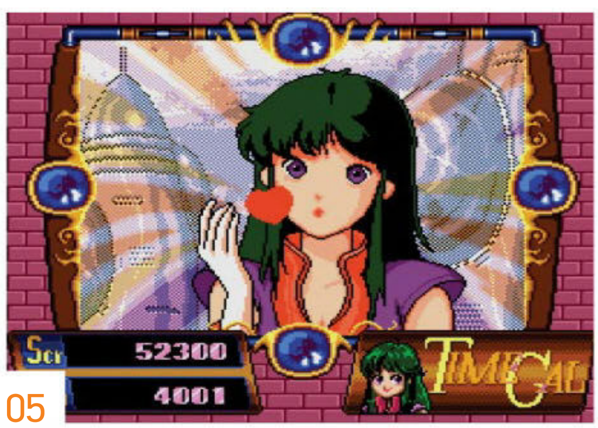
03

» Of course, he's too late to do anything about the shot he's fired, and the massive generator behind him is torn asunder. He manages to escape his chair in an attempt to escape, but there's no way he's outrunning that explosion.



04

»Reika returns to the future, having fled the imminent explosion. Society is duly impressed by the way she foiled Luda's plot to change the past, and doesn't seem to question the fact that she used her time-freezing powers to kill him, rather than to simply arrest him for an eventual trial.



05

» Our unexpectedly deadly time cop then blows you a kiss for assisting her in her journey. We're mildly conflicted about that, but given that the known criminal Luda was planning to seize power for himself with his time travel shenanigans, we'll take it. Here's to the lesser of two evils!


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